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# Warrior Bishops: The Development of the Fighting Clergy under the Ottonians in the Tenth Century

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**Warrior Bishops: The Development of the Fighting Clergy under the  
Ottonians in the Tenth Century**

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## Abstract

The Ottonian Empire in Germany experienced numerous wars, invasions, and rebellions over the course of the tenth century. Because the royal family practiced an itinerant form of rule, they established an infrastructure of ecclesiastical establishments that facilitated the royal household's movements and defended the rest of the realm. It was here that the fighting clergy, or the bishops and abbots who actually took up military command, became a crucial component of the empire's stability and protection.

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## Introduction

The conflicting roles of the early medieval bishop as a spiritual leader and as a military commander became an increasingly complex issue in Germany during the tenth century. Under the Ottonian dynasty, ecclesiastical magnates played a significant part in the secular administration of the kingdom, which frequently included participation in military affairs. Despite the numerous Church doctrines forbidding “clerical participation in warring activities,” the clergy’s presence on the battlefield by this period in time was not a novel development, although it usually was a point of contention between the Catholic Church and the ruling nobility that imposed these military duties on religious leaders.<sup>1</sup> Various land conquests, civil wars, and pagan invasions were a significant part of life in early medieval Europe, and the clergy were so involved in worldly affairs that their presence in military matters was inevitable. Following the Carolingian tradition in the eighth and ninth centuries, bishops, abbots, and even popes participated in the military affairs of the Ottonian Empire.<sup>2</sup> The clergy contributed both to the defense and the expansion of the empire, and as the royal government relied on their ecclesiastical magnates more and more in military affairs, the attitude towards violence and the warrior bishop within the German Church itself shifted. In this study, I will focus on the development of the fighting clergy in the tenth century and their significance to the stability of decentralized Ottonian government.

### *Historiography: The Lost Century*

When examining studies pertaining to the development of the fighting clergy under the Ottonians, it is important to understand the context in which the tenth century is viewed in

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg im Früheren Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim Aufbau der Königsherrschaft* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1971), 81.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

modern scholarship. It is often seen as a pivotal point in Western European history, either as a continuation of Roman tradition in Late Antiquity or the first true century of the Middle Ages. John Howe wrote two articles that discussed the position that the tenth century occupies in the grand narrative of European history: “Re-forging the ‘Age of Iron’ Part I: The Tenth Century as the End of the Ancient World,” and “Re-forging the ‘Age of Iron’ Part II: The Tenth Century in a New Age?” The former article examines the Ottonian Empire and its culture as a continuation of (and the end of) the Roman tradition. It was Emperor Constantine who began to bring clergy members on military campaigns in the fourth century, although the first bishops who set foot on a battlefield did not actually participate in military command, much less in fighting. It was a way of boosting morale, favoring his Christian soldiers, and providing them access to religious services.<sup>3</sup> The passive nature of clergy in warfare was reinforced by the councils in later centuries, when bishops were explicitly forbidden to participate in war.<sup>4</sup> The importance of religion and religious rituals in warfare, however, guaranteed that the clergy were always involved with military activity in their regions. In the late eighth and ninth centuries, the Frankish kingdom used bishops for military purposes as well. Like Constantine, Charlemagne disregarded a separation of Church and State, particularly when it came to military matters.<sup>5</sup> It was under Charlemagne, however, that the clergy started to appear regularly as active agents in military command. The Ottonian dynasty would follow in their footsteps over a century later.<sup>6</sup> For the Ottonians, the continuation of the Roman Empire was nearly synonymous with the continuation of their Frankish predecessors.

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<sup>3</sup> David S. Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> John Howe, “Re-Forging the ‘Age of Iron’ Part I: The Tenth Century as the End of the Ancient World,” *History Compass* 8.8 (2010), 872.

<sup>6</sup> Bernhard Walter Scholz and Barbara Rogers, trans., *Carolingian Chronicles: Royal Frankish Annals and Nithard’s Histories* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1970), 46.

Also known as the Liudolfings, the Ottonians were originally the ruling family in the Frankish duchy of Saxony.<sup>7</sup> Henry I was the first of the family to ascend to the throne of the easternmost portion of the old Carolingian Empire in 919, aptly named East Francia. While he began to expand the kingdom's territories during his reign through military conquest, it was his son, Otto the Great (Otto I), who assumed the title of "Emperor" after invading Italy on behalf of Pope John XII in 962.<sup>8</sup> His successors, Otto II, Otto III, and Henry II, also bore this title, expanding their territories in all directions and creating an empire that rivaled Charlemagne's. The line of succession from Henry I to Otto III passed from father to son, breaking only when Otto III died without issue. Henry II, a cousin of the late king, seized power in 1002 and ruled until his death in 1024.<sup>9</sup> The Salians became the next dynastic family in the eleventh century.<sup>10</sup>

While the height of the Ottonian Empire was in the midst of the tenth century, its origin and policies were clearly indebted to the older Frankish empire under the Carolingians in the eighth and ninth centuries. It is for this reason that many scholars focus their attention on the rule of Charlemagne and the Carolingians when discussing the fighting clergy even during the tenth century. Friedrich Prinz, a German medieval historian, wrote a book in 1971 called *Klerus und Krieg im Früheren Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim Aufbau der Königsherrschaft* (*Clergy and War in the Early Middle Ages: Examination of the Role of the Church in the Construction of the Monarchy*). Prinz's book is a cornerstone for any modern scholar examining the clergy's military involvement in the early medieval period.<sup>11</sup> According to

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<sup>7</sup> See Appendix A for a genealogy chart of the Liudolfing family.

<sup>8</sup> David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 62.

<sup>9</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 1.

<sup>10</sup> The Ottonians and the Salians were often grouped together on account of their similar policies, particularly in regards to their relationship to the Church. For this purpose, however, I will not be discussing the Salian dynasty in order to focus on the developments of the tenth century, specifically. Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, 91.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Bachrach, Rev. of *Klerus und Krieg im Früheren Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim*

Prinz, the concept of *milites Christi* was an allegory that meant for the clergy to lead their flocks (or armies) to spiritual salvation, though it was used in the literal sense as Charlemagne took advantage of its literal interpretation to press higher clergy members, particularly bishops, into military service. While this could mean that they had to provide soldiers and provisions from their household, it could also mean active military service for the clergy member himself.<sup>12</sup> Charlemagne's efforts to institutionalize the bishops and abbots in the political sphere of the empire coincided with the "aristocrat-ization" of the Church.<sup>13</sup> The increasing presence of nobility in the ranks of the higher clergy meant that these individuals held obligations to both their lord and the Church. By appealing to their aristocratic duties, these men started to appear in the military history of the Carolingian Empire.

Prinz focuses his research on the emergence of the fighting clergy in the eighth and ninth centuries, a symptom of the larger integration of religious institutions and the government into a *Reichskirchensystem*, or "Imperial Church system."<sup>14</sup> The consolidation of the lands of the clergy under the central government helped Charlemagne maintain control over his empire. The Ottonian empire would also use this system to establish control. But the generalized assumption that the clergy in tenth-century East Francia had the same function as the newly recruited clergy of the eighth and ninth centuries takes too far a step. The Ottonians, controlling a similarly large swath of territory on the eastern borders of Christendom, ruled in an itinerant fashion, traveling regularly throughout the kingdom to maintain order. Their new system now relied on the support of religious institutions to house and provide for them, and to keep their authority when they

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*Aufbau der Königsherrschaft*, *The Catholic Historical Review* (1974), 479.

<sup>12</sup> Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, 73-113.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

moved on.<sup>15</sup> Prinz's argument fails to examine the fighting clergy under the Ottonians in a new cultural context that accounts for their geographical shift and development over time.

Other historians have taken the stance of Howe's second article, which sees the influence of the Carolingians and the Ottonians as the start of a new era in the High Middle Ages. Another German scholar, Leopold Auer, addressed the fighting clergy under the Ottonians in an article called "Der Kriegsdienst des Klerus unter den sächsischen Kaisern" ("The Military Obligations of the Clergy under the Saxon Emperors"), also written in 1971. The article discussed the various bishops and abbots that fought in the wars of the Ottonian period, focusing on the culmination of the *Reichskirchensystem* and the exploitation of the fighting clergy in the eleventh century under Henry II.<sup>16</sup> He pinpointed the western duchy of Lotharingia as the area in which the fighting clergy really became a standard presence in military conflicts. In all of the wars that the Ottonian Empire fought, the concentration of bishops in active and critical positions of command were higher in the West and in the South during the Italian campaigns, and this number of active participants rose dramatically from the campaigns of Otto the Great to the wars of Henry II. The late Ottonian and Salian period in the eleventh century saw a peak in the Holy Roman Empire's power over the Church and a subsequent backlash by the papacy and many local ecclesiastical institutions during the Investiture Controversy.<sup>17</sup> Largely quantitative, Auer's article is a wonderful resource for looking at the trends of the fighting clergy from the later tenth century to the eleventh century, but, like Prinz, he does not examine the Church's role in tenth-century Ottonian warfare in its own context.

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<sup>15</sup> John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 56-60.

<sup>16</sup> Leopold Auer, "Der Kriegsdienst des Klerus unter den sächsischen Kaisern," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 79 (1971): 316-407.

<sup>17</sup> I.S. Robinson, introduction to *Eleventh-Century Germany: The Swabian Chronicles*, trans. I.S. Robinson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 18.



Both studies by these German scholars are cited by many contemporary authors, but they are now quite outdated.<sup>18</sup> A number of English-language scholars have since studied the military exploits of the Ottonians, which has put a new emphasis on the importance of the contributions of the earlier Ottonian kings, namely Henry I and Otto I. David S. Bachrach and Bernard Bachrach have studied the contributions of Henry I in particular and his implementation of fortress systems and the use of local levies, which led to the “Saxon military revolution” of siege-style warfare.<sup>19</sup> This style of warfare, which was especially visible on the eastern and northern borders of the German kingdom, was worth comparing to the corresponding importance of the clergy in warfare, as many of these clergy members organized the defense of cities and fortresses rather than participating in open battle.<sup>20</sup> Fortresses and fortified cities made up the military infrastructure of the German kingdom, which expanded as the empire grew, was monitored and manned by royal ecclesiastical households. The geographical placement of royal monasteries and the location of loyal bishops in relation to areas of conflict within the empire dictated the role of the fighting clergy, particularly when one considers that the Ottonians relied on a form of itinerant kingship.

### *Sources*

Surviving primary sources of the tenth century are few and far between. Few of the common legal documents and letters of the laity in the tenth century still exist today, and the ones that did survive destruction were almost always written by the Church and commissioned

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<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that there is more German scholarship on this topic; however, due to limited resources and time, I have only thoroughly examined these two studies to supplement my research in the English language.

<sup>19</sup> B.S. Bachrach and D. Bachrach, “Saxon Military Revolution, 912-973?: Myth and Reality,” *Early Medieval Europe* 15.2 (2007), 219. The Bachrachs offered this argument in opposition to Karl Leyser’s theory that the Ottonians were responsible for the introduction of the mounted knight in combat. This development was evident in the Carolingian period.

<sup>20</sup> David S. Bachrach, “The Military Organization of Ottonian Germany, c. 900-1018: The Views of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg,” *The Journal of Military History* 72 (2008), 1071.

by the nobility.<sup>21</sup> The most common written documents of this era, and the ones that I have examined closely, are chronicles, histories, and annals. These genres of medieval text were fairly similar. Histories were descriptive accounts that could range from broad to very specific subjects, but usually focused on one topic. Chronicles were “temporal narratives” that tended to share similarities with annals, which were brief compilations of historical events, usually recorded by year.<sup>22</sup> The distinction between these genres were not completely separate in the tenth century, as the works produced became more descriptive and detailed in regards to military and political matters. Two works that I have examined closely are *Deeds of the Saxons* by Widukind of Corvey and the *Chronicon* of Thietmar of Merseburg. The former is a history from the tenth century and the latter is a chronicle from the early eleventh century; despite their differences in form, Thietmar relied heavily on Widukind’s history for his own work. These two important contemporary authors wrote extensively over Ottonian military history and gave the most insight into the evolution of the clergy’s involvement in warfare.

Widukind of Corvey, a Saxon monk writing in the second half of the tenth century, showed a keen interest in the military events of his time. The shift in attitudes towards warfare within the clergy may have been a result of the geographical shift of the ruling dynasty to Saxony. *The Deeds of the Saxons* was completed in 973 for Princess Mathilda, the daughter of Otto I.<sup>23</sup> The work began with the origin of the Saxon people, followed the political and military affairs of the Ottonian dynasty starting with Henry I, and ended with the death of Otto I and Otto II’s ascension to the throne. Widukind paid particular attention to the conflicts of Henry and

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<sup>21</sup> Bachrach, *Warfare*, 5.

<sup>22</sup> I.S. Robinson, preface to *Eleventh Century Germany: The Swabian Chronicles*, trans. I.S. Robinson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), vii.

<sup>23</sup> Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach, introduction to *Deeds of the Saxons*, by Widukind of Corvey, trans. Bernard S. Bachrach and David S. Bachrach (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), xiii.

Otto's rules, both of which dealt with Hungarian invasions, civil wars, and interventions in the West. Widukind had a fairly knowledgeable grasp of military matters. Not only did he come from a noble family that would have served in a military capacity, but Corvey itself was also required to provide soldiers and military services as a part of their royal obligations.<sup>24</sup> His bias towards the Saxon rule, courtesy of his own identity as much as the identities of his patrons, led him to write about military affairs with some knowledge of the intricacies of war. It also showed that the acceptance of violence in the Church began in the tenth century, making the time period significant in the larger framework of the development of the legacy of the warrior bishop and the fighting clergy.

The *Chronicon* of Thietmar of Merseburg is similarly useful for looking at the evolution of the fighting clergy in the late tenth century. Thietmar was the bishop of Merseburg, writing in the early eleventh century. Thietmar himself was related to the ruling family on his mother's side.<sup>25</sup> He was keenly interested in the military history of the tenth century, keeping careful track of sieges and battles. Like Widukind, he was also surrounded by relatives who served in the military, and he himself commanded troops on behalf of Henry II.<sup>26</sup> His accounts of clergymen in battles were written with great pride rather than shame or apathy, and his analysis of military organization under ecclesiastical and secular leadership showed that he understood the importance of the clergy's military contributions.<sup>27</sup> His acceptance of the presence of men of the Church in warfare signifies a normalization of clergy in active duty. Though the political motivations and reliability of Widukind, Thietmar, and other authors must always be read with a

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<sup>24</sup> Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution," 196.

<sup>25</sup> David A. Warner, introduction to *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, by Thietmar of Merseburg, trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 49.

<sup>26</sup> Bachrach, "Military Organization," 1067.

<sup>27</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 178-179.

grain of salt, examining these sources as historical sources and cultural indicators of the society's attitude towards the fighting clergy is invaluable.

### *Argument*

In this study, I will argue that the importance and the acceptance of the fighting clergy under the Ottonians in the tenth century was the result of the military and administrative policies implemented by Henry I, Otto I, and their predecessors. By developing an itinerant form of rule through the *Reichskirchensystem*, the Ottonians bestowed considerable economic and military power on ecclesiastical magnates in order to govern effectively and protect the kingdom. The parallel development of siege warfare and the increasing number of fortifications encouraged the participation of the clergy in military defense in every area of the kingdom. The number of recorded clergy members actually taking up military command increased drastically over the course of the century, particularly in areas that were not frequented by the king or occupied by his loyal secular vassals. Because their involvement in warfare in these areas was crucial to the survival of the empire, the integration of secular military duty into the duties of the clergy was met with increasing acceptance in the tenth century.

### *Outline*

In my first chapter, I will discuss the development of the *Reichskirchensystem* as the foundation for the institutionalization of the fighting clergy under the itinerant kingship of the Ottonians. The Carolingian kings implemented the concept of royal monasteries and an imperial church system, but the Ottonians reinvented this practice by creating an extensive network of ecclesiastical institutions through which to extend their rule. Among increasing secular obligations was the *Burgbann*, which charged monasteries with the upkeep of the ever-important

fortifications that spanned the kingdom. In my second chapter, I examine the major conflicts of the Ottonian Empire of the tenth century and trace the presence of the fighting clergy in each region of the empire, as well as their role in the numerous rebellions that cropped up. The military presence of the clergy increased in each region of the empire towards the end of the tenth century, but they became essential in areas left unfrequented by the king; the only region in which this did not happen was in Saxony, the favored destination of the ruling family. The third chapter closely examines the primary sources of Widukind and Thietmar, along with a selection of other works, to understand how the fighting clergy was perceived during the tenth century. The attitude towards the fighting clergy developed alongside its importance; by the time Thietmar was writing in the early eleventh century, violence perpetrated by the clergy was a normal subject and the warrior bishop was a heroic figure. This, of course, was the view of a man who was in the heart of the empire; eleventh-century authors in Lotharingia tended to portray them in a more modest light, and the chroniclers of the later eleventh century would start to turn their gaze away from the empire and towards the papal seat in Rome. The general attitude towards the fighting clergy, however, had shifted dramatically during the tenth century.

## Chapter 1: The Ottonian *Reichskirchensystem*

In order to understand how essential the fighting clergy were to the Ottonian Empire in particular, one must examine the larger context in which they were situated. The intricate relationship between the Ottonian State and the ecclesiastical institutions throughout the realm provided the *modus operandi* through which the kings of the tenth century could exercise military, economic, and religious control. The royal family granted land and privileges to key monasteries and bishoprics in exchange for supplies, religious benefits, and military power, which allowed the Ottonians to bypass the various aristocratic families within their territory. With the increasing importance of siege warfare, the military capabilities of the clergy became paramount in the defense of the realm. This system, which tied the royal court to the Church on a political and personal level, was partially the reason that the fighting clergy of the tenth century were crucial to the survival of the Ottonian Empire.

### *Carolingian Origins*

The origins of the *Reichskirchensystem* in the Frankish kingdoms were present from the beginning of Carolingian rule under Charles Martell in 718.<sup>1</sup> Before the Carolingian family assumed royal control over the Frankish kingdoms from the Merovingians, the bishops of the Frankish regions had considerably more control over their episcopates. Charles Martell and Pippin III, Charlemagne's grandfather and father respectively, began to consolidate power from the clergy by confiscating land and reducing their power over local monasteries by granting these monasteries to loyal followers and allowing them greater independence through the secular

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<sup>1</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1983), 31.—Charles Martel technically held the title of Mayor of the Palace while the Merovingian dynasty held the title of king, but he essentially ruled the kingdom. His son Pippin III was the first Carolingian to hold the title of king.

government.<sup>2</sup> By doing so, these institutions became more indebted to the king even as they expanded their own economic and political power. Bishops, however, already had access to independence and wealth. While the Merovingians lacked a powerful central government, the Carolingians aspired to consolidate power and saw the independent bishops as a threat. This resulted in an attempt to remove their secular power and material wealth.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the monasteries previously under their control assumed a more favorable role in the royal government.<sup>4</sup> The Carolingians received the support of these royal monasteries by granting these immunities and privileges, but they also wielded the power of appointment. For some ecclesiastical institutions, the best way to ensure loyalty was to grant abbacies to loyal followers.<sup>5</sup> The abundance of lay abbots, as well as Pippin III's increasing secularization of Church property, was controversial, but this trend continued through Charlemagne and the Ottonians.<sup>6</sup>

In the ninth century, the Carolingians took the royal control of the Church a step further. Under Charlemagne and Louis the Pious, monasteries, churches, and bishoprics that were granted immunity were also under royal protection, strengthening the bond between the royal household and the ecclesiastical institutions in the realm.<sup>7</sup> In exchange for these benefits were various obligations to the king and to the state, which ranged from religious services to supplying

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg im Früheren Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim Aufbau der Königsherrschaft* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1971), 64-65.

<sup>4</sup> McKitterick, *Frankish Kingdoms*, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>6</sup> John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 29. Immunities gave ecclesiastical institutions the right to oversee their own affairs, allowing them a certain degree of independence from local secular authorities. Only special immunities, however, granted them the right to independent elections, as the Ottonians usually had a hand in selecting new abbots, abbesses, and bishops.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 29.

military retinues.<sup>8</sup> The general term for obligations owed by the region's abbots and bishops to the crown was called *servitium regis*, a term Friedrich Prinz also used to refer directly to the military obligations of the high clergy.<sup>9</sup> In addition to general administrative and economic benefits, Charlemagne required the bishops and abbots of his kingdom to perform military service as a part of these legal obligations to the kingdom.

It was Charlemagne, according to Prinz, who fully institutionalized the role of the clergy in his kingdom, in political as well as military matters. Past Carolingian rulers were more sensitive to the complaints of the ecclesiastical reformers and only called their bishops out for spiritual guidance and religious services.<sup>10</sup> Charlemagne, however, took advantage of the fact that many members of the high clergy were also members of the nobility, appealing to their aristocratic backgrounds to convince them to participate in military service.<sup>11</sup> The Church issued several prohibitions over the years in an attempt to prevent this, each one emphasizing the ban on weapons and active military participation, but these had little effect on the secular government.<sup>12</sup> Loopholes also existed; the *Admonitio generalis* in 789, for example, banned the lower clergy such as priests and deacons from using weapons, but the higher clergy, namely bishops and abbots, were not mentioned.<sup>13</sup> Despite resistance from the Church and the individual clergymen affected by these military obligations, bishops still appeared in battle. Even so, resistance to this change was still palpable. As late as 895 in the Synod of Tribur, prayers and offerings were banned for any clergy members who had fallen in battle or in a fight.<sup>14</sup> Although the Church's

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>9</sup> Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, 79.

<sup>10</sup> David S. Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 73-74.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 26.



views of the warrior bishops changed tentatively over the course of the tenth century, writers shied away from the depiction of these men in actual violent conflict.

Despite debates and contradictions between Church doctrine and the reality of warfare, a glaring exception to the rule existed in the form of defense against pagan enemies. Northern Europe was wracked with constant Viking attacks in the early Middle Ages. The Frankish kings constantly fought with the pagan peoples of Saxony and Bavaria, whom Charlemagne conquered and converted much the same as the Saxons themselves would do to the Slavs.<sup>15</sup> When the enemy was non-Christian, the attitude towards the holy men who fought against them was much more positive.<sup>16</sup> In many cases, a bishop's violent actions in warfare could be dismissed on the grounds that the enemy was non-Christian. This mentality persisted into the tenth century, even though a large number of bishops in the Ottonian period led armies against the Christian armies of Western kingdoms, rebellious noblemen, and Roman nobility of the Italian Peninsula.<sup>17</sup> Even in the east, when the aggressive missionary policies of the Ottonian kings meant that the people of Poland and Bohemia were largely Christian by the time Otto III was on the throne, the Emperor was sending troops led by Bishop Giselher of Magdeburg to aid a Christian Poland to fight against the Christian duchy of Bohemia.<sup>18</sup> While the threat of pagan invasions certainly encouraged the acceptance of the fighting clergy, other conflicts that could not be so easily

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<sup>15</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *Charlemagne: The Formation of a European Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 252-254. Charlemagne defeated and forcibly converted the Saxons in the late eighth century, although it took several decades to establish religious institutions in the new territory.

<sup>16</sup> Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, 110-111. It also helped that many of the institutions to the east carried out a lot of missionary work. The Slavic invasions many bishops were involved in were generally seen as a rejection of the Christian faith.

<sup>17</sup> Leopold Auer, "Der Kriegsdienst des Klerus unter den sächsischen Kaisern," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 79 (1971), 322.

<sup>18</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 158. Miesco of Poland vs. Boleslav II of Bohemia in 990. Technically, Empress Theophanu sent troops to Miesco's aid, as Otto III was only ten years old at the time.

explained by a religious agenda indicated that the institutionalization initiated by the Carolingians had a great effect on the clergy of the Ottonian period.

### *Renewal under the Ottonians*

The relationship between the Church and State in the tenth century was a much as renewal as it was a continuation of the Carolingian tradition. By taking over ecclesiastical property and distributing it in order to eliminate the threat of independent bishops in the eighth and early ninth centuries, the Carolingians tightened their control over the Church. Subjecting bishops to political and military duties also enabled them to bring ecclesiastical authority and assets under their influence, which the Ottonian kings imitated in the tenth century. They also granted immunities and lands to monasteries and convents as the Carolingians did to build relationships with these establishments for spiritual, political and economic benefits. But the transition between these two periods was rather disjointed; the consolidation of land and power did not last in the west Frankish kingdom. As the Carolingian empire fractured into smaller pieces in the ninth century, the royal churches and monasteries in each region remained loyal to their sovereign, rather than remaining in a larger network.<sup>19</sup> By the time Henry I ascended the East Frankish throne 919, the *Reichskirchensystem* was intact but not nearly as important as it once was. The connection between the royal churches in each kingdom was nonexistent, and the system as a whole was hardly important to the region's political stability. When the Ottonians came into power, they consolidated older royal monasteries and new establishments to create an ecclesiastical network through which they could exercise power.

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<sup>19</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 30.

Even though the Ottonians expanded royal monasteries in a continuation of the Carolingian tradition, the purpose of this system and its role in administration changed drastically in the tenth century. Henry I's ascension to the throne in East Francia caused a major geographical shift eastward in political power. The eastern kingdom originally comprised of the duchies of Saxony, Bavaria, and Thuringia, and Franconia, all lands that had recently been absorbed by the Carolingians in the last several centuries.<sup>20</sup> They had the disadvantage of being a new royal family; Henry I was elected by his peers after the death of King Conrad.<sup>21</sup> As the duke of Saxony and member of the Liudolfing family, Henry I had much support within his own duchy, but various rebellions and civil wars against their rule in other regions of East Francia in the coming years suggested that the legitimacy of the royal family was not entirely unquestionable.<sup>22</sup> In order to impose their rule, the royal family had to exercise military power in each region of the kingdom. Saxony, however, had no central administrative capital like Charlemagne's empire had. Aachen still retained symbolic significance for the Ottonians, but it was located so far west in Lower Lotharingia that its power as a central administrative center no longer existed.<sup>23</sup> With no political infrastructure to rely on, Henry I and his descendants were forced to become mobile in order to impose their rule. It was with this itinerant form of administration in mind that the Ottonians rebuilt a network of royal Churches.

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<sup>20</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Simon Maclean, trans, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 235. Conrad was the Duke of Franconia before he too was elected king of East Francia in 911. He was not related to either the Carolingians or Henry I.

<sup>22</sup> David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 17-19. Henry I had to establish control over the nobility in Swabia and Bavaria immediately through military campaigns after his election as king. He also had to intervene in Lotharingia several times after he acquired it in 923.

<sup>23</sup> Every Ottonian king in the tenth century was crowned in Aachen, as per Carolingian custom. The only exception was Henry II, who seized power after Otto III's sudden death in 1002. He was crowned in Werla. Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 207.

The itinerant nature of the Ottonian kings in the tenth century was one of the most well-known characteristics of tenth-century Germany. This direct method of overseeing the kingdom—the king’s physical presence and authority—differed greatly from the earlier Frankish method. While Charlemagne and his relatives used ecclesiastical magnates to handle administration and maintain a working infrastructure, the Carolingian kings did not move around so frequently.<sup>24</sup> The Ottonians reestablished these Carolingian royal monasteries, such as the monastery of Corvey, which was located in the central zone of between West and East Francia.<sup>25</sup> On the eastern frontier, they built new monasteries to accommodate the royal household.<sup>26</sup> Between them, they constructed and maintained a network of roads that allowed them to travel through their territories with ease. John W. Bernhardt specified three “triangles” of frequently visited locations, which encircled the most important regions of the German empire. The first, inherited from the Carolingian kings, was Aachen, Nijmegen, and Cologne, all within the duchy of Lower Lotharingia.<sup>27</sup> The second triangle, located in Franconia, consisted of Frankfurt, Ingelheim, and Worms. Frankfurt was also a city favored by the Carolingians. The third area, however, was located in Eastern Saxony, and included Magdeburg, Merseburg, and Gandersheim.<sup>28</sup> The triumvirate of transit zones covered three crucial areas of administration and allowed the central part of the empire to encompass a large part of Saxony, which persevered even during the reign of the Salian emperors in the eleventh century.<sup>29</sup> This study pinpointed the

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<sup>24</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 48.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 195-196.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>27</sup> The Duchy of Lower Lotharingia, or Lower Lorraine, was actually further north than the Duchy of Upper Lotharingia. Lower Lotharingia was directly south of Frisia, which is now Holland. See Appendix D for a map of the duchies in the later Ottonian period.

<sup>28</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 60-62. Bernhardt borrowed and adapted Eckhard Müller-Mertens’ study of Otto I’s movements across the Germanic regions. Because German kings likely made frequent stops at royal monasteries that were never recorded, Müller-Mertens calculated travel times for the known itinerary and made predictions about the stops made in between. See Appendix C for a map of Otto I’s main routes.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

avored destinations and residences of the king during peacetime; in times of conflict, of course, the king traveled as far as Rome and Gaul if the need arose. The areas of Bavaria, Swabia, Upper Lotharingia, and Northern Saxony, however, were infrequently visited by the royal household unless it was specifically for a campaign.<sup>30</sup>

The royal family naturally gravitated towards Saxony and the east, even when they were frequently moving. The religious landscape of the eastern frontier was under-developed compared to the kingdom's western territories, which had a number of well-established monasteries and dioceses.<sup>31</sup> Considering that the Saxons had recently converted to Christianity in the late eighth century, there was not much to work with.<sup>32</sup> The Saxon kings took this opportunity to found a number of new religious establishments in the east, including the convent of Quedlinburg in Walbeck in 936, as well as the monastery of St. Maurice in Magdeburg in 937.<sup>33</sup> These new monasteries shifted ecclesiastical power east, but they also served as several of the favorite residences and strongholds of the Ottonian dynasty.<sup>34</sup> This network of royal monasteries served as a physical infrastructure through which the royal household could travel and depend on for economic and military support.<sup>35</sup>

The royal family strengthened their relationship with these eastern monasteries further by installing their own relatives. Many of the rulers of these ecclesiastical households in the tenth century were directly related to the Liudolfing family. Not only were male relatives of the king favored for positions in the clergy, but royal women also held positions of power within

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>31</sup> Karl Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society: Ottonian Saxony* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 84.

<sup>32</sup> McKitterick, *Charlemagne*, 253.

<sup>33</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 138 and 162.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1.

important royal convents. Quedlinburg and the convent of Gandersheim, both of which Otto I, Otto II and Otto III frequently visited, were ruled by Ottonian princesses in the tenth century. Quedlinburg “maintained the right of advocacy for the Liudolfing family,”<sup>36</sup> and a number of royal women entered this convent, including Otto’s sister and his daughter Mathilda. Princess Mathilda, who acted as regent for her father in Saxony, was the abbess of Quedlinburg from 966 to 999.<sup>37</sup> Otto III’s sister Sophie was the Abbess of Gandersheim at the turn of the century.<sup>38</sup> The close familial connections between the king and the various royal leaders of his realm encouraged a stronger infrastructure that did not rely on the local nobility for economic or political power. Although the Ottonians had much more success installing their relatives and loyal candidates in positions of ecclesiastical power in Saxony than in other duchies, especially towards the end of the tenth century, the relationship between the royal family and their royal monasteries was crucial when traveling through various regions to take care of invasions in the east, civil rebellions, and other crises that occurred.

The reason for the family’s commitment to the foundation and upkeep of monasteries and convents was, of course, not entirely secular; the religious benefits of the royal monasteries were a significant element in the relationship between the royal household and the imperial Church. But even religious benefits had a military and political significance. Even though the Carolingians pushed the traditional limits of the clergy by requiring them to take a more active role in warfare, they still performed prayers and religious services on the ruler’s behalf that ensured their spiritual and political security. The Carolingian kings projected the image of sacral kingship through lavish coronation ceremonies celebrating unction, which effectively legitimized

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>37</sup> Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. David S. Bachrach and Bernard S. Bachrach (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 3; Bernhard, *Itinerant Kingship*, 143.

<sup>38</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 150-151.

their rule of both secular and religious matters.<sup>39</sup> The Ottonian dynasty, which had to build their influence on the church from scratch, eventually took on this mantle of divine authority as well. Henry I refused unction, much to Thietmar's disappointment.<sup>40</sup> Otto I was anointed, however, as were his successors. As each successive king contributed to the growing power of the Church, the image of the king as the "elect of God" became increasingly important.<sup>41</sup> For the Ottonians, their constant travel from one monastery to another once the network had been established promoted the legitimacy of their rule through the Christian faith.

Aside from the Ottonians' constant attempts install their own candidates to positions of leadership, monasteries and bishoprics had considerable power and independence during the tenth century. Royal monasteries boasted independence from taxes and the jurisdiction of local nobility. The king could also grant them the rights to various properties and the incomes from taxes on local markets, boosting their economic value.<sup>42</sup> These benefits were granted on the basis of *servitium regis*, but more privileges the monastery had, the greater obligations they owed to the kingdom. The monasteries were required to provide supplies and lodging for the king and his retinue, which could include entire armies. Several royal monasteries frequented by Otto I built or owned royal quarters for this very purpose.<sup>43</sup> The supplies set aside for secular purposes were distinct; most of the lands granted to monasteries were distinguished between the abbot or abbess's lands and the lands that belonged to the monastery or church. The king would draw on supplies from these private lands, just as he relied on the abbots' service in war rather than the

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<sup>39</sup> John Howe, "Re-forging the Age of Iron Part II: The Tenth Century in a New Age?" *History Compass* 8.9 (2010), 1007.

<sup>40</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 73. "In the biography of the holy father Ulrich . . . one can read that the holy martyr of Christ, St. Afra, showed many things to her beloved bishop in a vision. Among these things were two swords, one with a hilt, the other without. The second sword represented King Henry who lacked a consecration."

<sup>41</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 62.

<sup>42</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 148-149.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 166. The monastery of St. Maurice, in addition to holding extensive lands in Magdeburg, also acquired the city's royal residence in 937.

lower clergy.<sup>44</sup> The clear distinction between secular and ecclesiastical did not entirely avoid disputes between the Church and State about the proper use of the land, but it did separate the role of the Abbot (or Abbess) from the rest of the group. The role of the abbot became increasingly secular, particularly in the case of lay abbots, who were loyal vassals of the king rewarded with the leadership of a monastery.<sup>45</sup> While both lay abbots and ‘regular’ abbots were expected to serve the kingdom and even participate in military campaigns, lay abbots also held secular roles that influenced their actions as clerical leaders.<sup>46</sup> Before Henry I’s ascension to kingship, for example, his father Otto, the Duke of Saxony was also the Lay Abbot of Hersfeld and used his position to seize the monastery’s land for his own use.<sup>47</sup> The clear connection between secular and ecclesiastical authority was naturally an unpopular subject among the Church; not only were these religious leaders directly influenced by the king, but in several instances, they held their secular offices at the same time.

One of the most important services the monasteries performed for the royal itinerary was the *Burgbann*. This was a legal obligation that required local estates to maintain fortresses necessary to the defense of the royal entourage.<sup>48</sup> Bernhardt specified that *Burgbann* grants directly related to the maintenance and protection of the path of the royal itinerary within the empire, but various bishoprics and monasteries also protected fortresses built for external defense, especially on the eastern and northern frontier. These obligations were not always carried out by the dependents of the ecclesiastical authority—many institutions were favored by the King and while the ecclesiastical leaders had authority over the military mobilization of the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, 105-106.

<sup>47</sup> Bernhard, *Itinerant Kingship*, 245-246.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 57.



area, they drew their manpower from secular districts outside of their own estates.<sup>49</sup> The dependents were protected under immunities granted by the king. Although the resources under all households were crucial to the military infrastructure, the Ottonian rulers gave the most authority to their religious followers.

### *Military Obligations of the Clergy*

Because ecclesiastical establishments included large swaths of land that were inhabited by laymen, they were responsible for a large amount of people who owed the state military service. While the scarcity of actual military legislation from the tenth century has seriously inhibited the study of the precise military tactics of the Ottonian Empire, David Bachrach used Thietmar's *Chronicon* to construct a model of tenth-century military organization.<sup>50</sup> While the study does not claim to be complete, Bachrach identifies a "three-part organization" of military forces that are based on Thietmar's own observations and his familiarity with ninth-century military models; another continuation of Carolingian tradition in the tenth century. These three sections were the military households of secular and ecclesiastical magnates, regional expeditionary levies, and local levies.<sup>51</sup> Military households and expeditionary levies were used for campaigns, but all levels of military organization were used to maintain defenses, especially because siege warfare was such a dominant style of warfare. While lesser clergy were not allowed to handle weapons or participate in warfare, the laymen under the jurisdiction of monasteries and bishoprics were a part of the estate's military household, which the king could call upon when needed.<sup>52</sup> These professional soldiers were often used to supplement the king's

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<sup>49</sup> Bachrach, *Warfare*, 74.

<sup>50</sup> David S. Bachrach, "The Military Organization of Ottonian Germany, c. 900-1018: The Views of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg," *The Journal of Military History* 72 (2008), 1064.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 1067.

<sup>52</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 34.

own royal military household, or to defend the region when the king was not present. In this case, the local magnates commanded them. This was especially true on eastern frontiers, where both ecclesiastical and secular leaders were responsible for defenses, even serving jointly to defend one fortress.<sup>53</sup> These magnates also led expeditionary levies, which served outside of their home duchies, usually to serve in far-reaching regions such as Italy and the eastern frontier.<sup>54</sup>

One of the crowning military achievements of the Ottonians in the tenth century was the implementation of *agrarii milites*, or the use of local manpower for military operations.<sup>55</sup> During a nine-year peace treaty with the Hungarians, Henry I began to secure older Carolingian fortresses and built new ones. He trained men from local levies to live in and maintain these fortifications; this was the start of the *Burgbann*.<sup>56</sup> The addition of local defenders alongside a proper army improved military power in a way that was conducive to the itinerant nature of the Ottonian Empire, gaining local militia where they were needed and leaving them behind to continue defense when leadership was needed elsewhere. The increasing use of fortifications and siege warfare in the tenth century meant that the Ottonians now relied on local secular and ecclesiastical strongholds to secure the realm. The king was able to travel to areas that required

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<sup>53</sup> B.S. Bachrach and D. Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution, 912-973?: Myth and Reality," *Early Medieval Europe* 15.2 (2007), 1073. Bachrach points to an incident in Arneburg in 991, when Archbishop Giselher of Magdeburg was scheduled to defend the fortress with his soldiers from the abbey of St. Maurice for four weeks, then hand the defense over to Margrave Liuthar. This indicated that Otto III had "a system of rotating contingents of soldiers provided by both ecclesiastical and secular magnates to serve the garrison." For the full excerpt from Thietmar's *Chronicon*, see pp. 55.

<sup>54</sup> Bachrach, "Military Organization," 1077-1078. Bachrach notes that expeditionary levies from certain regions were occasionally separate from the military households of local magnates, such as Otto II's Bavarian force when he fought against Duke Henry the Quarrelsome of Bavaria in 976; he also points out that Bishop Michael of Regensburg also led an expeditionary levy to the eastern frontier.

<sup>55</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 49. While members of the military households were clearly professional soldiers, the social status of *agrarii milites* are harder to define. See Edward Schoenfeld's article "Anglo-Saxon 'Burhs' and Continental 'Bürgen': Early Medieval Fortifications in Constitutional Perspective" for a more in-depth look at the identity of the *agrarii milites*.

<sup>56</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 45-49.

his attention, leaving others to man the rest of the realm through a series of fortifications.<sup>57</sup> The most common form of military service performed by ecclesiastical households was the maintenance and defense of fortresses.

Although bishoprics were not included in this intricate method of travel, they were subject to this integration of the secular and the religious in this system as well, especially in a military context. Although the early Carolingians limited the power of the bishoprics, later Carolingian rulers and their Ottonian successors would increase their power and privilege once they were firmly in the sphere of royal influence. Bishops were still an integral part of the kingdom, and controlled a considerable amount of land, wealth, and manpower. Like the abbots and abbesses of the royal monasteries, many bishops of the tenth century had blood ties to the royal family. Brun of Cologne was one such example, holding the title of Archbishop and the Duke of Lotharingia in order to keep the troublesome area under control for his brother.<sup>58</sup> Although the dual position concerned some, his ability to hold both offices illustrated the ambiguity of the ecclesiastical and secular offices held by ecclesiastical leaders who were often nobility. Like the abbots of these royal institutions, bishops could also be expected to contribute military resources and to lead the men they provided into battle.<sup>59</sup>

The clergymen who actually commanded troops were most conspicuous participants of the *Reichskirchensystem*. The ancient ban on the use of weapons had been repeated over and over, and despite modifications, the official stance of the Church was still against the use of weapons. The *Capitularia missorum specialia* in 802 banned priests and deacons from using

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<sup>57</sup> Bachrach, "Saxon Military Revolution," 202.

<sup>58</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 44.

<sup>59</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 119.

weapons, although members of the high clergy, namely bishops and abbots, were not specified.<sup>60</sup> The Carolingian government faced stubborn opposition from some of their subjects on the matter. During and after the tenth century, however, the presence of bishops on the battlefields was recorded with little comment. While outright violence was still taboo, the presence of the cleric on the battlefield was neither odd nor shameful by the time Thietmar of Merseburg wrote his *Chronicon*. This extreme requirement of *servitium regis* was not immediately a common occurrence in the early years of the Ottonian empire, but the framework of royal churches and secular duties allowed the fighting clergy to become so efficient and systemized.

The earlier Saxon kings lay the foundation for this system, and role of the clergy became progressively more important until its culmination under Henry II. The last Ottonian emperor used the *Reichskirchensystem* to its full potential. His close relationship to the papacy and his increasing reliance on bishops to perform secular services actually allowed the last Ottonian emperor to form a more centralized government, based in Merseburg.<sup>61</sup> Stepping away from an itinerant form of rule made the administrative functions of the ecclesiastical magnates essential to the defense of the realm, although it was clear that Henry II still traveled frequently on the same routes as his predecessors to address military conflicts as far away as Frisia.<sup>62</sup> In this respect, Henry II still relied on the infrastructure of his predecessors to support his army.

### *Conclusion*

The Ottonian *Reichskirchensystem* was not a new innovation, but the kings of the tenth century revived and expanded the role of the clergy in secular affairs to the degree that they were essential to running the empire. They established new monasteries and convents and favored

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<sup>60</sup> Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg*, 83.

<sup>61</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 43.

<sup>62</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 380. Henry II stopped in Nijmegen when preparing to attack Count Dietrich III of Frisia.

existing ones to build up a physical network of loyal households that would enable the monarch to travel the kingdom, provide military and economic support, and offered religious services for the family. The required military service was a part of the increasing secular duties of the bishop and the abbot, who often came from an aristocratic background, which made their involvement in war more valuable. Because bishoprics and monasteries controlled so much land and manpower that was free from the influence of local nobility, the Ottonians relied on them to carry out military campaigns and defenses. As we will see, the succession of wars and military campaigns during the tenth century were almost constant, and the enemies came from all directions. In order to protect the empire's interests, the clergy had to participate in warfare.

## Chapter 2: The Conflicts of the Tenth Century

The extensive infrastructure the Ottonians created for themselves allowed them to launch campaigns and defend their borders from every portion of the kingdom. Widukind of Corvey commented that “the Saxons were afflicted by many enemies, the Slavs from the east, the Franks from the South, the Lotharingians from the west, and the Danes and Slavs from the north.”<sup>1</sup> He was speaking of the challenges that Henry I faced, but this statement could apply to any of his successors. In the west, the Frankish kingdoms erupted into civil war several times, and the middle kingdom of Lotharingia became a point of contention between the Franks and the Saxons.<sup>2</sup> To the east, the Hungarians frequently raided the eastern border of the kingdom. Although they also invaded Western Europe through Italy, Saxony and Bavaria took the brunt of these raids, making their local defense systems imperative. The Ottonians came into conflict with various Slavic tribes as they tried to expand their empire, as well. Like the Frankish kingdoms did to their Saxon predecessors, the kings of the tenth century used a combination of military might and missionary work to expand their lands eastward.<sup>3</sup> To the north, they faced similar problems from Danish invaders, who had been terrorizing Northern Europe for several centuries.<sup>4</sup> Even after Henry I conquered and converted the Danes, the north experienced occasional uprisings. To the south, Otto I saw the opportunity to expand to Italy when King Berengar II attempted to take control of the Papal States.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. David S. Bachrach and Bernard S. Bachrach (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 81.

<sup>2</sup> J.R. Webb, “Representations of the warrior-bishop in eleventh-century Lotharingia,” *Early Medieval Europe* 24.1 (2016), 109.

<sup>3</sup> David S. Bachrach, *Warfare in Tenth-Century Germany* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2012), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Sources such as *The Annals of Fulda* reported Viking attacks constantly. The entries were short and to the point; an entry in 847 simply read: “The Northmen burned and laid waste to Dorestad.” Timothy Reuter, trans., *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth Century Histories, Volume II* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 26.

<sup>5</sup> Bachrach, *Warfare*, 62.

The combined force of these conflicts from all sides was complicated further with the rebellions of various duchies within the kingdom against every ruler in the tenth century. By Otto I's reign, ecclesiastical estates provided the bulk of military and economic support, and the infrastructure created by religious institutions on the border as well as the interior took part in every major conflict of the century, as did a number of bishops and abbots who fought both for the Saxons and against them.<sup>6</sup> The king himself often took part of the wars and campaigns that posed a direct threat to his authority, or were designed to expand his territory. The areas neglected by the royal household were the areas that these warrior bishops were heavily involved in. Although the sheer number of ecclesiastical men increased dramatically in all areas over the course of the tenth century and into the eleventh century, they were the most prevalent in conflicts that the king did not have as much control over.<sup>7</sup> The tenth century was the period in which the fighting clergy developed into a tool that the Ottonian Empire used to stabilize itself over a large geographical area.<sup>8</sup>

### *The West: Clashes with West Francia and the Civil Wars*

Despite East Francia's break in dynastic succession after the death of Louis the Child in 911, the Saxon kings remained closely tied to Carolingian affairs. In 923, Henry managed to take control of Lotharingia, the middle kingdom, when he marched against the West Francian king Charles the Simple.<sup>9</sup> This began a series of conflicts that in the West, which involved the middle

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<sup>6</sup> John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 35.

<sup>7</sup> Leopold Auer, "Der Kriegsdienst des Klerus unter den sächsischen Kaisern," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 79 (1971), 361-399. Auer takes a particularly quantitative approach to the Ottonians' successive Italian campaigns to show the increase in the number of bishops accompanying the king.

<sup>8</sup> See Appendix B for a map of the political boundaries of East Francia in the early tenth century; see Appendix D for a map of the empire under Henry II in the early eleventh century.

<sup>9</sup> Simon Maclean, trans, *History and Politics in Late Carolingian and Ottonian Europe: The Chronicle of*

kingdom changing allegiance frequently between the rulers in the east and the west. Count Gislebert of Lotharingia was originally loyal to Henry I when the duchy was originally annexed by the east, but his first rebellion in 925 foreshadowed a series of conflicts spanning the reigns of Henry I and his son Otto.<sup>10</sup> After Otto I's coronation in 936, Gislebert and Duke Eberhard of Bavaria took advantage of the renewed wars in the west to side with Louis IV, Charles's son, in favor of taking Lotharingia back from the Saxons.<sup>11</sup> In the case of the 925 and 939 rebellions, as well as a rebellion instigated by Otto's son Liudolf in 953, the king in question was physically present when his troops put down the rebellions.<sup>12</sup> The last two rebellions in particular involved multiple conspirators in areas like Bavaria and Franconia—their dissent was a palpable threat to the king's authority.

According to Auer, Otto I's policies towards Lotharingia became the turning point in the role of the fighting clergy. In 939, Duke Gislebert was not the only Lotharingian to turn against East Francia; the Bishops Bernain of Verdun, Gauzlin of Toul, and Adalbero of Metz all fought for Louis IV.<sup>13</sup> Otto eventually subdued Louis IV and defeated the rebels in the Battle of Andernach, where Gislebert drowned while trying to flee across a river.<sup>14</sup> Despite his victories, Adalbero actually managed to hold out in Metz for a while longer until there was news of the defeat and the German troops lifted their siege of the city. The high number of ecclesiastical military leaders was remarkable, and Otto clearly understood the importance of the episcopal cities as military strongholds. In the next significant conflict in Lotharingia under Otto II, the

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*Regino of Prüm and Adalbert of Magdeburg* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), 237. Charles attempted to invade East Francia and take back areas of the Rhineland.

<sup>10</sup> Bachrach, *Warfare*, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians, 751-987* (New York: Longman Group Limited, 1983), 317-318.

<sup>12</sup> Maclean, *Regino of Prüm*, 238, 243, 254.

<sup>13</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 327.

<sup>14</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 85.



young emperor focused on reinforcing the military strength of Toul and several monasteries in Lower Lotharingia. The goal was to pit them against the secular nobility in the Vogses Mountains; this did not succeed.<sup>15</sup> Otto II's appointment of the Lotharingian clergy, however, was by this point a fairly normal occurrence. His father gained interest in the military possibilities of the clergy, which was best exemplified by the appointment of Brun as the Archbishop of Cologne.

Brun of Cologne epitomized the aim of the *Reichskirchensystem* as both the Archbishop of Cologne and as the Duke of Lotharingia. He was Otto's brother, the third son of Henry I and his second wife Mathilda. During the events of the 953 uprising, Otto named him the Archbishop of Cologne in order to counteract Duke Gislebert's power in the west; when he died a year later, Brun received his title as well.<sup>16</sup> He performed the duties of both titles from 954 until his death in 965. The archbishop was undoubtedly the highest-profile warrior bishop of the tenth century; he was the secular and religious head of the entirety of Lotharingia and managed to bring it to heel while Otto I fought Hungarians and Slavs in the east and invaded Rome several years later.<sup>17</sup> His presence in the west was a big factor in the success of Otto's reign. Even when the king was not currently fighting a war, he could not impose his own authority in either upper or lower Lotharingia nearly as well as his brother could through his own political and military power. By installing Brun in the west, Otto managed to drastically extend his power through the Church into an area that needed constant attention. No one else received this much power after his death, but Bishop Notker of Liège became a close confidant of the Ottonian family and continued to

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<sup>15</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 352.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23-24.

<sup>17</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 95.

support their rule in Lotharingia.<sup>18</sup> Although it is unclear whether he actually participated in a battle or led an army, he clearly held maintained his own militia and defended the Saxon rule with enthusiasm. His death in 1008 was a great loss for the German empire, especially considering that Henry II would be stuck fighting a war in Lotharingia himself while another war also raged in the east a couple years afterwards.<sup>19</sup>

The result of mounting reliance on the clergy in Lotharingia was evident in Henry II's reign, when the bishops were at the height of their power within the imperial system. Many of the conflicts in the west were land disputes between the secular nobility and the ecclesiastical leaders in Lotharingia and its surrounding areas, which included conflicts with Frisia and Flanders. In the following decade, a dispute in 1018 between Count Dietrich III of Frisia and Bishop Adalbold of Utrecht ended in an ill-fated battle that consisted of the ecclesiastical contingents of Lower Lotharingia: Utrecht, Cambrai, Liège, and Trier.<sup>20</sup> Adalbold and Count Gottfried of Verdun led the initial battle, which ended in failure.

The latter had previously murdered the bishop's retainers, thereby causing him much harm. Their warriors gathered on a certain island and quickly prepared for battle. But alas, the death with which they had threatened the enemy came to them instead. For they were attacked on all sides by the Frisians, who rushed out of their places of concealment. Without warning, the young man's retainers were surrounded and, terrible to say, they lost their lives by the sword or in the water. They were unable to cause any harm to their opponents. The bishop escaped in a boat, and the duke was also rescued from the enemy. According to reliable testimony, the number of the dead

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<sup>18</sup> Webb, "Representations," 109.

<sup>19</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 356.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

exceeded three legions. Now, the entire region lacks a strong defender and, in its misery, must fear the daily arrival of pirates.<sup>21</sup>

Henry, who was in Nijmegen at the time, eventually interfered himself, although the bishop and the count eventually decided to reconcile in order to prepare against Viking attacks. Thietmar impressed that the region needed a strong defender to fulfill this task, and although the secular nobility were a part of this, the bishop of Utrecht was needed to consider the western coast safe from invasion.<sup>22</sup> It is also notable that Dietrich was in fact one of Adalbold's retainers; the count should have answered to the bishop directly rather than being on opposite sides of a war.<sup>23</sup>

As the territory controlled by the Ottonians grew, so did a number of uprisings that grew increasingly more elaborate with time. In each instance, the clergy became more integral to the response to these challenges to authority. The previously mentioned rebellion in 953 also involved the duchies of Bavaria and Franconia in addition to Lotharingia, which led to a siege of Regensburg.<sup>24</sup> Among Otto's supporters was Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg, who managed to defeat Liudolf's troops in Swabia and seriously cripple the rebels' support.<sup>25</sup> In the following months the city surrendered, but the situation quickly spiraled out of control when Otto received word of Slavic invaders attacking Saxony under the leadership of two rebel counts, and Hungarian raiders attacked Bavaria shortly afterwards. In two decisive battles in 955, he crushed both invading armies. Ulrich played a large role in the Battle of Lechfeld, as the Hungarians had targeted the city of Augsburg.<sup>26</sup> Although previous scholarship has attributed Otto's victory his almost exclusive reliance on heavy cavalry, recent studies have concluded that the German army

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<sup>21</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 380.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 382.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>24</sup> Maclean, *Regino of Prüm*, 254-255.

<sup>25</sup> Bachrach, *Warfare*, 52-53.

<sup>26</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 25.

defeated the Hungarians by utilizing the intricate system of fortifications on the eastern frontier. These fortresses served as bases for field operations, allowing them to plan short attacks that decimated the enemy and then retreat to well-protected fortifications.<sup>27</sup> This strategy was called “*defense in depth*,” another term for the three-part military organization discussed in chapter one.<sup>28</sup> Like most of the wars fought after Henry I, the focus was on fortifications. True to the pattern that started to appear, Ulrich was responsible for defending the fortified city rather than fighting in open battle. Very rarely were any of these men depicted on a battlefield (although it was not unheard of). The abundance of fortifications and sieges most likely contributed to the increase of the participation of the clergy in warfare; even if a bishop or abbot adhered to the bans laid down by the Church synods, leading the defense of a fortification would likely exempt him from having to wield a weapon or meet an enemy in open battle.<sup>29</sup>

### *The East: Bordering the Barbarians*

Ulrich was the only notable religious figure involved in the east under Henry I and Otto I, notwithstanding Archbishop Frederick of Mainz, who conspired with Liudolf and his allies but never actually fought.<sup>30</sup> This was partially because there was no strong tradition of a bishopric or monasteries in the area; Magdeburg only became a diocese in 968.<sup>31</sup> Strong military leadership on the eastern border usually fell to secular authorities, such as Margrave Gero, who defended

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<sup>27</sup> Charles R. Bowlus, *The Battle of Lechfeld and its Aftermath, August 955: The End of the Age of Migrations in the Latin West* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006), 47.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>29</sup> The carefully written anecdotes of bishops in battle by monastic scribes who were mindful of the restrictions imposed on the clergy make it difficult to ascertain just how much clergy members participated in warfare. Some stories told by multiple authors such as tale of Bishop Franco of Liège have clearly been altered to emphasize or to diminish his military role. Webb, “Representations,” 113.

<sup>30</sup> Maclean, *Regino of Prüm*, 255-257. Frederick of Mainz plotted against Otto I multiple times. In the last rebellion he tried to remove himself from the conflict and ended up dying in 954, though his death had nothing to do with the war. William, Otto I’s natural son, succeeded him.

<sup>31</sup> Auer, “Kriegsdienst,” 400.

against Hungarians and Slavs until well into the 960s.<sup>32</sup> The distinct lack of ecclesiastical involvement was simply because there was no infrastructure to support an ecclesiastical household. While the Saxons had been a nuisance in the east in previous centuries, the Hungarians and the Slavs became the new heathen enemies in the east, never seen before Ottonian period to this extent. This was new territory for the Church, and the Ottonians took full advantage of it by founding their most important monasteries and dioceses. Auer interpreted the development of the eastern *Reichskirchensystem* and the attached development of the fighting clergy as an inspiration or replica of the system that already existed in west, particularly because the foundation of the Diocese of Magdeburg occurred after the Lotharingian uprising.<sup>33</sup> However, the structure of the *Reichskirchensystem* was largely in place by the time this happened—Henry I himself founded Quedlinburg, and built many more fortifications that would become a part of this, including a castle in Meissen.<sup>34</sup> Even if the local religious community was not a part of the defense in the first half of the tenth century, there was not much need for strong ecclesiastical leadership. Much of the eastern border was near the heart of Saxon territory, which meant that the secular and ecclesiastical leaders in the area were much more reliable than the nobility outside duchies such as Lotharingia and Bavaria. The system of Saxon monasteries and convents founded and maintained by the Ottonians also ensured that the royal family had a strong presence in the east, which meant that they did not have as much of a need for remote leadership. The strongest evidence of the fighting clergy on the eastern border was in Bavaria, which was much less controlled within the border as it was without, as the crisis in 953 revealed.

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<sup>32</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 150.

<sup>33</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 400.

<sup>34</sup> David S. Bachrach, "Henry I of Germany's 929 military campaign from an archaeological perspective," *Early Medieval Europe* 21.3 (2013), 327. Thietmar made special note of the Meissen stronghold, as he frequently stationed his own troops there on behalf of Henry II. David S. Bachrach, "The Military Organization of Ottonian Germany, c. 900-1018: The Views of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg," *The Journal of Military History* 72 (2008), 1072.

The Slavs and the Hungarians, however, remained a problem that would earn the attention of the royal government and the Church for years to come. Henry I arranged a short peace with the Hungarians in 924, during which he built up his fortifications in the east and trained *agrarii milites*, or local militia, to man them.<sup>35</sup> In 929, he launched a campaign against the Slavs and managed to subdue a number of different tribes, which was successful because he had access to local men and supplies.<sup>36</sup> The later incorporation of ecclesiastical households in local levies and the *Burgbann* was clearly influenced by secular strategy of Henry's campaigns. Once established, the clergy did follow the institutionalized obligations, and occasionally men like Ulrich of Augsburg made an appearance. A greater number of bishops began to appear on the eastern frontier towards the end of Otto I's reign. Perhaps most infamously was Bishop Michael of Regensburg, who was the subject of an unusually colorful account:

When the bishop had ruled the see long and well, he and other Bavarian leaders went to rescue the eastern regions where the Hungarians were again causing trouble. But the battle between them had barely begun when, alas, our forces were beaten and utterly demolished by the enemy. The bishop lost an ear, was also wounded in his other limbs, and lay among the fallen as if he were dead. Lying next to him was an enemy warrior. When he realized that the bishop alone was alive, and feeling safe from the snare of the enemy, he took a lance and tried to kill him. Strengthened by the Lord, the bishop emerged from the long, difficult struggle and killed his enemy.<sup>37</sup>

The unusually detailed anecdote brings several things to light. The foremost was that there were men of the Church who fully participated in violent conflict, despite attempts by monastic authors to remove such evidence. Although Thietmar did not say that Michael actually carried a weapon, he did end up on a battlefield with a missing ear and several wounds. This likely meant

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<sup>35</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 49.

<sup>36</sup> Bachrach, "929 military campaign," 337.

<sup>37</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 112.

that he was actually in the battle rather than just commanding. Thietmar described him as one of the Bavarian leaders, which put him on equal ground with the local secular leaders. As an ecclesiastical leader with no secular titles, his military obligations lay completely within his status as the Bishop of Regensburg. He also actively killed a man, which would have counted as shedding blood, even if the action was in self-defense. Even so, Thietmar portrayed him as a hero of both laymen and clergy members alike. He was “held to be a brave warrior by all the clergy and the best of pastors by the people, and his mutilation brought him no shame.”<sup>38</sup>

The rich detail of Michael’s actions in battle was unusual, but excusable in the context of the battle he participated in. The man he fought was a pagan soldier in the Hungarian army, the one exception to the otherwise severe restrictions the Church put on participation in warfare, even if those restrictions were ignored regardless. The bishop had only killed in the defense of his own life and the lives of his fellow Christians, and was therefore justified in his actions. This mentality carried over from the barrage of Viking attacks in the north in the ninth century, when bishops were frequently forced to defend their own cities.<sup>39</sup> Certainly, the war against Hungarian invaders and Slavic tribes would follow this rule. Thietmar described a campaign during Otto II’s reign against a Slavic uprising that Bishops Giseler of Merseburg and Hildeward of Halberstadt and were a part of, using precise religious terms to identify the campaign’s moral purpose:

Bishops Giseler and Hildeward joined with Margrave Dietrich and with the other count . . . at dawn, on Saturday, they heard mass together. Then after fortifying body and spirit with the sacrament of heaven, they confidently fell onto the approaching enemy and, except for a few who found refuge on a hill, completely annihilated them. The victors praised God, marvelous in all his

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Friedrich Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg im Früheren Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim Aufbau der Königsherrschaft* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1971), 81.

works, and the truthful word of the teacher, Paul, was confirmed: 'There is neither prudence nor strength nor counsel against the Lord.'<sup>40</sup>

The clear religious boundary between the bishops and their aristocratic allies and the Slavic enemy made their participation in 'complete annihilation' justifiable. Thietmar makes note of the liturgical rites performed by the Germans before battle, a clear sign that their victory was divinely willed.<sup>41</sup> While Thietmar does not reveal the extent to which the two bishops took part in military command, he does not set them apart from the secular leaders who must have participated in the bloodshed.

The eastern conflicts under Otto I's successors, however, did not always involve non-Christian opponents. Under Otto II, the Archbishop Giselher of Magdeburg gained the rights to an army, and protected the eastern border with the support of several counts and Margrave Dietrich von der Nordmark.<sup>42</sup> During the early years of Otto III's reign when his mother, the Empress Theophanu was regent, Miesco of a newly Christianized Poland under Duke Miesco entered into a war with Boleslav II of Bohemia, calling upon the Saxon empire to aid him. Theophanu sent Giselher to aid him.<sup>43</sup> As both sides were led by Christian leaders, the conflicts of the east held the same moral ambiguity as the conflicts in west and the south, particularly when Henry II decided to switch sides in the prolonged conflict and start a war against Poland.<sup>44</sup> But the eastern frontier needed a stronger system with local leaders at this point in time. Otto II

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<sup>40</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 143.

<sup>41</sup> Michael McCormick, "The Liturgy of War in the Early Middle Ages: Crisis, Litanies, and the Carolingian Monarchy," *Viator* 15 (1984), 8-9. Liturgy was another tradition that stemmed from the Carolingian period, used to ensure victory in battle. The bishops and the counts likely heard mass from a noncombatant, although it is interesting to note that during the Battle of Lechfeld, Thietmar identified Ulrich of Augsburg as the priest who heard Otto I's confession. Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 98.

<sup>42</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 400-401.

<sup>43</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 158.

<sup>44</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 404.



had left for Italy in 980 and never returned; Otto III was only three years old and Empress Theophanu nearly lost him to the plots of Henry II of Bavaria, who attempted to use his young cousin to claim the throne for himself.<sup>45</sup> The earlier Saxon kings may have been able to control monitor the frontier earlier, but the near-crisis in the 980s meant that the east had a power vacuum to fill. The fighting clergy in the east after Otto I were necessary to the stability of the region, and so Giseler was present in the histories alongside war heroes like Michael of Regensburg.

### *The South: Italy and the Papacy*

The amount of secular influence over the local clergy also indicated the general ineffectualness of the papacy and their attempt to create a central ecclesiastical power. Although reformers in the eleventh century attacked the stranglehold the German kings had over the clergy, using the Pope as a counterpoint to Salian Emperor Henry IV, criticism of the military affairs of men such as Michael of Regensburg during the tenth century and early eleventh century was minimal.<sup>46</sup> The increasing acceptance towards warfare and violence was only part of it—there was no counterpoint to the empire save for the Pope, whose influence was largely unimportant in Germany during the tenth century. The imperial crown was an important symbol for both the Carolingians and the Ottonians, but the power it bestowed was arguably already present in the royal church system that often answered to the king regardless of titles. When the clergy had to provide military support in order to govern themselves, local authority was more important than a man in Rome. Some clerical authors took care, however, to note that the current

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<sup>45</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 149.

<sup>46</sup> T.J.H. McCarthy, trans., *Chronicles of the Investiture Contest: Frutolf of Michelsburg and his Continuator* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 2.

king was also the Emperor, and that they owed their allegiance to him as a ruler of divine right.<sup>47</sup> This view persisted for some areas of Europe even through the Investiture Controversy, when the Papacy finally regained some power.

The Ottonians initially had little direct contact with the papacy, and only got involved with papal affairs when they campaigned in Rome. The first campaign in Italy was under Otto I in 951 when he answered a distress call from Adelaide of Italy, who offered to marry Otto in exchange for protection from Berengar II of Italy. The campaign was fairly short; Otto became the overlord of Northern Italy with little opposition and didn't involve papal conflicts. In the 950s, however, Berengar took advantage of the chaos in Germany and attacked the Papal States. John XII appealed to Otto to intervene, and the king prepared a second campaign into Italy.<sup>48</sup> Auer pointed out that while Otto did well on this first campaign, he had relatively few Italian bishops to rely on, whereas Berengar had the staunch support of several key bishops.<sup>49</sup> In order to invade Italy and occupy it successfully for a long period of time, Otto would have to gain the support of the local clergy to create his own support system in the territory. This showed that he was aware of the importance the military support the clergy provided to him; much of his support also came from the *Reichskirchensystem* from home.<sup>50</sup> By taking advantage of the military and economic services provided by the German and the Italian high clergy, Otto I was able to successfully invade Rome and overthrow Berengar. In 962 the pope crowned him the Emperor of

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<sup>47</sup> Webb, "Representations," 123. Webb examines a number of anecdotes written in eleventh century Lotharingia portraying warrior bishops. In this section, he points out that the bishops of Liège supported the Emperor over the Pope during the Investiture Controversy, suggesting that his position was in some cases more influential than Rome. Interestingly, the Gregorian reform was quite militant in nature.

<sup>48</sup> Bachrach, *Warfare*, 62.

<sup>49</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 362.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 365. Brun sent him troops; Bishop Ulrich of Augsburg actually accompanied him to Italy with his military household.

the Holy Roman Empire, which paralleled Charlemagne's entrance in Rome two hundred years prior.<sup>51</sup>

The title of Emperor was largely ceremonial, considering that the German king made it to Rome by using the clergy to his advantage. The title further justified the institutionalization of the fighting clergy in literature as Otto I, Otto II, Otto III and Henry II exercised divine right through their status, which gave their hold over the clergy more legitimacy. The authority it endowed in Germany, however, did not work as well in Italy. The Italian nobility revolted several times over the course of the tenth century against the empire's influence, prompting each new German king to launch a new campaign to Rome. In each of these campaigns, Auer counted an increasing number of bishops that accompanied the king to Rome. Otto I returned a third time to Italy in 965 to put down yet another rebellion that had deposed the newly-elected pope representing the emperor's interests.<sup>52</sup> He frequently traveled to Italy between 965 and 970, dealing with the Italian nobility as well as the Byzantine Empire. During that time, he brought at least twenty eight bishops and their military contingents with him. This was a far cry from his earlier campaigns that were mainly secular.<sup>53</sup> When Otto II campaigned in Italy, three fourths of his army comprised of ecclesiastical households.<sup>54</sup> When Otto III launched his final campaign in 1001, the bishops that accompanied him represented nearly every diocese in his empire with the exception a few that had little military significance. Not all of these men served the emperor in a military capacity, but the Italian campaigns clearly displayed, in quantitative numbers, the Ottonians' increasing utilization of the clergy as a display of military, political, and ecclesiastical

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<sup>51</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 101.

<sup>52</sup> Bachrach, *Warfare*, 66. Pope John XIII. Otto I sent Bishops Otger of Speyer and Liudprand of Cremona to make sure the election went in his favor.

<sup>53</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 370.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 379.

power.<sup>55</sup> Bishops both from the emperor's homeland served in his campaign, while gaining the support of the local Italian clergy was paramount to holding Italy for a longer period of time.

The sheer number of the bishops in the Emperor's military retinue did not discourage uprisings or dissent in Italy. While each king installed a pope who was sympathetic to their needs when necessary, the Roman nobility overthrew undesirable candidates and placed their own candidates on the papal throne at an alarming rate. Otto I and his successors had the foresight to commend several of their own men to the Roman episcopates, such as Otto III's cousin Gregory V, who became the pope during his first campaign in 996, but the peace did not last.<sup>56</sup> The Ottonians had a weak hold on Italy while they were away, and unlike their unfrequented areas near their homeland that were supported by the royal churches, the German influence was too weak in Rome. Even though Otto III attempted to stay in Rome during the end of his reign—he actually planned to rule from Rome and had begun an ecclesiastical reform program there—his death in 1002 once again loosened the empire's grip on Italy.<sup>57</sup> In order to keep Italy under his control, the Henry II had to travel there personally and exert his authority.

### *Conclusion*

The fighting clergy were visible in every corner of the empire, supporting the king in his military campaigns and defending the regions when he wasn't present. The quantity of ecclesiastical magnates performing military duty increased significantly after the first half of the century, at the end of Otto I's reign, but the foundations of their effectiveness as military commanders were in place long before that. The Church's military duties through the Burgbann

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 390.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 384-385. The Papacy went through a number of popes and antipopes, who were set up by political rivals in Rome to challenge the authority of the current pope. The Crescentius family unseated Gregory V in favor of Antipope John XVI, and Otto had to march back to Italy in 998 to put down the rebellion.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 382.

and the Ottonians' itinerant rule made ecclesiastical households a logical choice to defend the realm during an intensified use of siege warfare. The king's increasing reliance on the clergy for military support was not always successful—Adalbold of Utrecht's blunder, for example, harmed the empire's activities in the west more than anything. But the systemized use of the fighting clergy normalized the presence of the bishop in military command, so much that they were expected to fight for the empire by the end of the tenth century.

### Chapter 3: The Memory of the Fighting Clergy in the Ottonian Period

In earlier centuries, the concept of the fighting clergy was novel and contested by secular and religious authorities; by the eleventh century, the military capacity of the clergy had reached its full potential. Henry regularly deployed members of the high clergy and utilized ecclesiastical military resources for both offensive and defensive confrontations at a higher rate than the secular nobility.<sup>1</sup> This reliance on the Church for military support began in the eighth and ninth centuries, but it evolved drastically in East Francia over the course of the tenth century. Along with the actual development of the fighting clergy came a fundamental change in the attitude of the clergy themselves towards their role in warfare, evident in the contemporary sources that reflected on the military affairs of the Ottonian Empire. As previously discussed, these sources were not entirely reliable and must always be read in context, they provide valuable clues as to how the clergy viewed the legitimacy and the significance of the fighting clergy. Criticism and controversy among tenth century authors existed, certainly; the close relationship between the secular and the ecclesiastical offices in the Holy Roman Empire experienced a violent backlash in the mid-eleventh century when the Pope finally began to step out of the shadow of the Holy Roman Emperor. At the height of the Ottonian Empire, however, criticism was mild, and in some cases, it was not even directed towards the violence itself, but rather the political implications of the event in question. Authors discussed the bishops and abbots involved in warfare with a matter-of-fact tone and occasionally with admiration. These men were not violating the law or committing atrocities unbefitting of their stature, but rather acting as loyal vassals of the Empire and defending their flocks against invaders. By examining the nature of the

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<sup>1</sup> Leopold Auer, "Der Kriegsdienst des Klerus unter den sächsischen Kaisern," *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung* 79 (1971), 353.

sources themselves, we see a clear relationship between the treatment of the fighting clergy and their mounting significance in the military and political affairs of the empire.

It is no coincidence that the most prominent accounts of the tenth-century Ottonian Empire were written by men with strong Saxon ties. Widukind of Corvey and Thietmar of Merseburg provided the most reliable histories that displayed intimate knowledge of military matters. Written nearly fifty years apart, their accounts revealed a changing attitude in Saxon circles, particularly, towards the fighting clergy and towards warfare as a whole. Widukind discussed the accomplishments of Henry I and Otto I, who revived the Carolingian tradition of using the Church for political and military infrastructure. Thietmar borrowed heavily from Widukind to discuss the earlier events of the tenth century, but his in-depth accounts of the reigns of Otto II, Otto III, and Henry II revealed how prevalent the fighting clergy was due to the foundations laid by their predecessors. The geographical shift of power from the west to the east was a major factor in the development of the fighting clergy; it also affected the attitudes towards the system and its place in society. Widukind and Thietmar were both located in Saxony itself, far enough east to be in the center of royal influence. Both Merseburg and the monastery of Corvey were wonderful examples of the royal churches in the network of Ottonian power centers. Corvey's central location connected the western duchies to the East, serving as an important royal monastery on the road to Lotharingia, especially.<sup>2</sup> The See of Merseburg was one of the easternmost ecclesiastical establishments in Saxony itself, and served as an important base for missionary work for the Slavic peoples in the east.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> John W. Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship and Royal Monasteries in Early Medieval Germany, c. 936-1075* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 180-181.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 40. This was between the founding of the diocese in 968 under Otto I and its dissolution in 981 under Otto II, and after Henry II reinstated it in 1004. See Appendix E for a map of dioceses.

Authors in other geographical areas showed an increasing lenience towards the fighting clergy as well. While their support for the fighting clergy of the Ottonian Empire was decidedly less enthusiastic and more critical, authors in regions such as the west showed admiration for the bishops and abbots who led the defense of their cities. Widukind and Thietmar had a clear bias towards the legacy of the Ottonian emperors, but the progression of historical accounts throughout the empire indicated a wider acceptance of the marriage of martial and religious power. These accounts showed how the Ottonian emperors anchored their ecclesiastical authority in the east, where the Saxon nobility had the strongest hold, and imposed their values on the rest of the Church system through the infrastructure of the empire itself.

#### *Widukind of Corvey*

Widukind made a point to legitimize the Saxon kings' rule by connecting them to the earlier Carolingian Empire, although he emphasized the dynasty's identity as Saxons was paramount, especially in regards to Otto I. This decision was doubtlessly made regarding his audience, Otto's own family. The first book described the origin of the Saxons as a kind of heroic age, culminating in Charlemagne's subjugation and conversion of the Saxon people in the early ninth century, which "as we see today, it was as if [the Franks and the Saxons] had been transformed into one people through their Christian faith."<sup>4</sup> After the conversion took place, Widukind also referred to the Saxons as East Franks, and the "entire Frankish and Saxon people" witnessed the both Henry I and Otto I ascend to the throne.<sup>5</sup> While Henry was portrayed as an equal among Saxons and Franks alike, Otto I had a stronger connection to his identity as a Saxon

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<sup>4</sup> Widukind of Corvey, *Deeds of the Saxons*, trans. David S. Bachrach and Bernard S. Bachrach (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 39 and 61.



leader. At his coronation, the king wore a “tight tunic in the Frankish style.”<sup>6</sup> In a description of his manner and personality, however, Widukind claimed that “he dress[ed] in the clothing of his homeland, and never puts on foreign garb.”<sup>7</sup> While Widukind worked to portray the Ottonians as continuators of the Carolingian tradition, he also showed a slow acceptance of the incorporation of a Saxon identity, as well. The extent of Otto I’s ‘Saxon-ness’ was highlighted in obvious ways, such as the description of his clothing, it could also be found in Widukind’s approach to interpreting history itself. The most prominent way in which this was displayed was the information that he chose to include or to leave out altogether.

*Deeds of the Saxons* focused on the military exploits of the Henry I and Otto I in locations close to their homeland, particularly in the wars to the east. Liudolf’s rebellion and the subsequent siege of Regensburg, the Battle of Lechfeld, and Otto’s campaign against the Slavs were all described in great detail, which defined the tone of the entire history. Other exploits, such as his 962 campaign into Italy, were all but ignored, merely a footnote in the grand history of the Saxon kings.<sup>8</sup> Widukind detailed Otto’s second war against Berengar II, but left no mention of his meeting with the pope. Although he called him the “elect of God,” which referred to his royal unction as a king, no mention of the pope could be found. Yet Widukind did not neglect to speak of him as if he were an emperor after the fact. His power in Saxony and the surrounding kingdoms was enough for Widukind—clearly, the authority of the pope held little meaning for him and possibly not for his royal audience. It would be impossible to interpret his

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>8</sup> Widukind first refers to Otto I as “the emperor” after the Battle of Lechfeld, before he actually received the title, possibly because of the king’s change in status, or because he considered the victory over the Hungarians to be the actions of an emperor; in this case, he would be drawing similarities between Otto I and Charlemagne. Widukind, *Deeds*, 129.

motivations behind leaving out Otto's coronation as emperor, but Widukind didn't seem put much stock in the religious politics outside of his local area.

Widukind did, however, praise Brun of Cologne for his role in bringing peace to Lotharingia as both a bishop and a duke. Widukind did not discuss the controversy of the royal churches under the Saxon kings and their disregard for the canon, but he handled Brun's blatant contradiction of Church doctrine with a simple statement: "Let no one say that Brun bears some guilt for this, since we read that Samuel, the saint, and many others were both priests and judges."<sup>9</sup> His explanation did not illustrate a reason for which this merger of secular and ecclesiastical offices was acceptable, but it did indicate that the possibility was not as taboo as it would have been during the Carolingian period, likely because he was surrounded by clergymen who blurred the lines between the secular and ecclesiastical as well. He did not expand upon Brun's military exploits in Lotharingia, similarly to his omission of Otto's coronation, but he recorded the outcome of the bishop's efforts, which was to stabilize the region. His interpretation mirrored that of Ruotger, a monk who wrote the archbishop's biography, *Life of Bruno*, after his death in the 960s. Ruotger responded to the criticism of Brun's dual positions in Lotharingia and his military exploits with the same response: his actions brought peace to the turbulent region, so the ends justified the means.<sup>10</sup>

Both authors clearly sided with the Ottonians—and Brun, despite his prominence as a member of the clergy, was still an immediate member of the royal family—which caused them to disregard the various dilemmas the region experienced even after Brun got it under control. He had trouble placing his own candidates in strategic positions, such as the abbey of Lobbes, near

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<sup>9</sup> Widukind, *Deeds*, 44.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Mayr-Harting, *Church and Cosmos in Ottonian Germany: The View from Cologne* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 6.

the see of Liège. The monks rejected Brun's candidate, a Lotharingian noble named Folciun, due to his connections to the Ottonians. He eventually gained a foothold in the abbey with the help of Bishop Notker, but the political opposition of the Lobbes monks reflected a general resistance to the intrusion of pro-Ottonian clergymen the Archbishop attempted to install.<sup>11</sup> Clergymen from western regions seemed to be more inclined towards criticism of Brun's political and military dominance. Flodoard of Reims was another writer of the tenth century who rarely addressed Brun as an archbishop at all, which Henry Mayr-Harting suggests may have been a subtle way of criticizing his military actions as while holding a title that should have prohibited him from doing so.<sup>12</sup> The dissent towards Brun from both ecclesiastical and secular leaders in Lotharingia was palpable in other texts, but not in *Deeds of the Saxons*. Widukind finished the book around the same time Ruotger wrote his biography; if he had access to it, perhaps he deemed the other monk's defense to be sufficient. It is more likely, however, that his project focused on the eastern portion of the empire and did not regard the dissent against Brun's during his twelve-year reign as important.

Altogether, Widukind's view of the Ottonian Empire was localized, focusing on the duchies of the German kingdom and ignoring some of the events that happened on the fringe of Saxony. Corvey's location had ties to the old Carolingian kingdom and was physically much closer to the western portions of the realm than the newly established monasteries and dioceses on the eastern frontier, but it was still intimately connected to the Ottonian royal family through its status as a royal monastery. Otto I possibly visited Corvey nearly likely times during his

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 26.

reign.<sup>13</sup> Widukind would have been aware of the role of the clergy in warfare due to his close proximity to the imperial family, as well as Corvey's own involvements with military obligations—contingents from Corvey were present in the 946 campaign in Lotharingia, though their numbers were not known.<sup>14</sup> Although Widukind did not mention clergymen other than Brun in a military context, his ambivalence towards the subject suggested that in the mid-tenth century, the clergy of Saxony were at least not completely adverse to this development.

### *Thietmar of Merseburg*

If Widukind focused primarily on Saxony, Thietmar was broader in scope; he took into account a wider range of lands and events that were important to the development of the fighting clergy. While he drew strongly from *Deeds of the Saxons* for the earlier events of his *Chronicon*, he also added and omitted details as he saw fit. The Ottonian Empire had expanded since Widukind's contribution, and the Otto I's descendants spent more and more time in Rome towards the end of the tenth century. Thietmar put a greater emphasis on Otto I's Italian campaigns and his relationship with the Pope, which added to his and his heir's legitimacy in their rule as well as their rule over the clergy. As the emperor of what could now be called the Holy Roman Empire, Otto's sacral authority in nearly all matters was uncontested; his appointments to various positions in the clergy made with "papal authority," which emphasized the fact that he had the spiritual authority to do so.<sup>15</sup> Interestingly, Thietmar was quite sensitive to the Ottonians' growing power over the internal affairs of the clergy, particularly concerning events closer to his own time. Before he officially became the bishop of the newly-reinstated

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<sup>13</sup> Bernhardt, *Itinerant Kingship*, 196. Only one known visit was officially recorded, but Bernhardt speculates that Otto I visited up to 28 times based on itinerary models.

<sup>14</sup> Auer, "Kriegsdienst," 343.

<sup>15</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg, *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 108.

diocese of Merseburg, his candidacy was jeopardized when Henry II attempted to install someone else as bishop. Thietmar's mentor, Tagino of Magdeburg, managed to convince the king to give Merseburg to Thietmar, but the threat of secular interference was an issue for the bishop.<sup>16</sup> This concern for the power of lay investiture, even as he promoted the emperor's divine right over the clergy within the empire, may have indicated the beginnings of the Investiture Controversy that would erupt over this very issue several decades later. On the other hand, he did not express concern for the clergy's obligations to participate in secular politics—or in war. Indeed, much of his writing strived to legitimize the role of the fighting clergy. Thietmar singled out a larger number of warrior bishops in his work, going to great lengths to protect their reputation.

Thietmar's fascination with the military affairs of the tenth century stemmed from his own experiences. Like Widukind, he came from an aristocratic family in Saxony, and many of his relatives actually participated in the wars that he wrote about.<sup>17</sup> Thietmar himself was a close confidant of Henry II and his wife, Cunigunde, as the king invested a good amount of time and political power into Merseburg after it was reestablished as a bishopric.<sup>18</sup> While the shedding of blood was still frowned upon, the concept of the warrior bishop was fascinating rather than shameful. Thietmar's account of Arn of Würzburg followed this pattern:

While returning from an expedition against the Bohemians, Bishop Arn of Würzburg set up his tent near this river, in the region of Schkeuditz, on a hill by the road leading to the north. As he chanted the mass, he was surrounded by a hostile army. After all of his companions had been

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 162. His father was Count Sigfried of Walbeck, who died in 991.

<sup>18</sup> David S. Bachrach, "The Military Organization of Ottonian Germany, c. 900-1018: The Views of Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg," *The Journal of Military History* 72 (2008), 1067.

martyred, he too was offered to God, along with the host which had been consecrated to the sacrifice of the praise.<sup>19</sup>

Thietmar's description of his death was hagiographic, depicting the bishop as a role model and a martyr, despite his presence on a military campaign. Clergymen travelled with armies to provide religious services to the military, but Arn was a known warrior.<sup>20</sup> His name appeared in the Annals of Fulda in conflicts between the Slavs and the Bavarians multiple times, and he defended against Vikings as well.<sup>21</sup> Even though he was honored in the *Chronicon* for his non-violent death, Thietmar did not apologize for or defend his militant past. Arn died just before the turn of the century in 892, before the focus of this paper.<sup>22</sup> Thietmar, however, recorded his death during the reign of Henry II, looking back on the golden age of Ottonian kings and the conflicts that wracked the tenth century.

The bishops that he took interest in generally fought the battles and wars that were justified, often located on the eastern or the northern frontier. Michael of Regensburg and Arn of Würzburg certainly fit into this category. Thietmar witnessed firsthand some of the campaigns in the east, which dealt with barely civilized people. The clergy of the west and the south were harder to portray. Adalbold of Utrecht, for example, led his men and the men of other episcopal contingents into a bloody battle that meant little in the end, anyway.<sup>23</sup> Thietmar refrained from praising Adalbold in this anecdote, instead constructing a careful apology for the bishop and focusing on the fact that with him and his secular rival incapacitated, the coast was vulnerable to

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<sup>19</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 69.

<sup>20</sup> Friedrich Prinz, *Klerus und Krieg im Früheren Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zur Rolle der Kirche beim Aufbau der Königsherrschaft* (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1971), 139.

<sup>21</sup> *The Annals of Fulda* mention Arn in 871, 872, and 884. In the former conflicts, he fought on the eastern frontier; in 884, his adversaries were Viking invaders. Timothy Reuter, trans., *The Annals of Fulda: Ninth Century Histories, Volume II* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 66, 68 and 95.

<sup>22</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 69.

<sup>23</sup> See pp. 33.

Viking attacks.<sup>24</sup> While he condemned the violence Adalbold was involved in, Thietmar also managed to make a point of his military significance in the area.

In a similar vein, he also criticized Archbishop Giselher of Magdeburg for his lack of military shrewdness and political ambitions, rather than his actual participation in warfare. His dislike for the archbishop likely stemmed from his role in the suppression of the See of Merseburg. According to Thietmar, Giselher, who was originally the bishop of Merseburg, was responsible for this act, which caused Thietmar “both disgust and embarrassment . . . and Giselher, *not* [Merseburg’s] *pastor but rather a mercenary* who strove ever upwards, attained his goal on 10 September . . .”<sup>25</sup> His goal was the Archbishopric of Magdeburg, a more illustrious position on the eastern frontier of the empire. By dissolving Merseburg’s bishopric and dissolving his own title, he was free to take Magdeburg. Of course, Otto II also had a hand in dissolving the bishopric, but Thietmar fails to mention him, laying the blame solely on Giselher.<sup>26</sup> If this was also a criticism of Ottonian emperor’s control over internal ecclesiastical affairs, it was a subtle rebuke.

Thietmar’s derisive label of mercenary was a strange choice, considering that he did not criticize the bishop for his role in military matters. As shown in chapter two, Giselher was presented on equal footing with the secular nobles sent to secure the eastern frontier on behalf of the royal family.<sup>27</sup> His derisive attitude returned in full force, however, when recalling a military blunder the archbishop made in 997:

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<sup>24</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 380.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

<sup>26</sup> David A. Warner, introduction to *Ottonian Germany: The Chronicon of Thietmar of Merseburg*, by Thietmar of Merseburg, trans. David A. Warner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 37.

<sup>27</sup> See pp. 38.

*Let us recall to memory what wretched damage occurred to Archbishop Giselher because of his carelessness.* For the protection of our homeland, the emperor had the Arneburg reinforced with necessary defensive works and placed it in Giselher's custody for a period of four weeks . . .

Through some yet unknown ruse, he was invited to a meeting with the Slavs and went out accompanied only by a small entourage. Some went ahead, while others remained in the fortress. Suddenly one of his companions announced that their enemies were bursting out of the woods. After *milites* from both sides were joined in combat, the archbishop, who had been travelling in a cart, fled on a fast horse. Only a few of his companions escaped death. Thus, the victorious Slavs plundered the belongings of the dead in complete security—it was 2 July—and complained only that the archbishop had escaped. In spite of the fact that his forces had been so severely cut up, Giselher guarded the fortress up to the agreed-upon day. While he was returning home, in great sadness, he encountered my paternal uncle, Margrave Liuthar, in whose care the aforementioned burg was now to reside. Without hesitation, he commended it to him and departed. When the margrave arrived, he saw smoke and fire coming from the fortress. A messenger was sent to request that the archbishop return, but without success and Liuthar himself tried to put out the fire, now raging in two different places. When nothing came of this, he surrendered the portal, opened it to the enemy, and sadly returned home. Afterwards, when complaints about him were brought before the emperor, he purged himself of any guilt by swearing an oath.<sup>28</sup>

The detailed description of the archbishop's failure was likely reliable, if biased, considering Thietmar's uncle took part in the event. His criticism is focused on Giselher's initial blunder, leaving the fortress to be ambushed, and then his failure to aid Margrave Liuthar after his military household's time manning the fortress had expired. Like his criticism of Adalbold of Utrecht, Thietmar's intention was to critique the military decisions of the warrior bishop rather than to condemn him. Even though he shared his duties with a secular leader, Giselher's

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<sup>28</sup> Thietmar, *Chronicon*, 178-179.



mistakes cost the margrave the fortress and weakened the eastern defenses. His anecdote highlighted the strategic significance of the bishop as an effective military commander.

### *The Authors of Lotharingia*

In the west, writers took a more tentative approach to the portrayal of violence in the clergy and the legacy of the warrior bishop. J.R. Webb's recent article "Representations of the warrior-bishop in eleventh-century Lotharingia" gives an excellent analysis of the changing attitudes towards the fighting clergy on the outskirts of the empire, where the political atmosphere was more removed from the Saxon government in the east.<sup>29</sup> The focus of his study took place in the latter half of the eleventh century, when the Salian dynasty lost control over the papacy and dissent of the emperor's stranglehold on ecclesiastical affairs was more prominent than it was in Thietmar's time. While the authors' attitude towards the concept of the warrior bishop was remarkably similar to the Ottonian authors listed previously, they were more sensitive and accepting to the violence in which the fighting clergy likely participated in, even if they did not lose an ear or their life.

Anselm's accounts sources detailing the warrior bishops of Lotharingia shied further away from violence, but not from the legitimacy of the bishop in battle. He first wrote a biography of his predecessor, Wazo of Liège. While he never depicted Wazo participating in violence, the older bishop actively led defenses of the city on multiple occasions. In order to defend him from possible critics, Anselm drew from a tradition of warrior bishops in Liège, all of whom defended the city out of necessity. The first man, Saint Lambert, was no warrior at all but an aggressively peaceful bishop who refused to draw his sword against his enemies. While

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<sup>29</sup> J.R. Webb, "Representations of the warrior-bishop in eleventh-century Lotharingia," *Early Medieval Europe* 24.1 (2016), 103-130.

the first versions of this tale depicted Lambert initially defending himself before laying down his arms, Anselm allowed for no such hesitation.<sup>30</sup> The completely passive Lambert was a model for the bishops to follow; although they clearly participated in warfare, none of Anselm's subjects ever directly participated in violence. Their contributions through military activity were significant; Bishop Franco defended the city against Viking attacks in the late ninth century, and Bishop Notker, a man loyal to the empire, organized military operations out of Lotharingia to maintain control in the west in the early eleventh century. Both of these men were dutiful to their lord and their people, and they did so, at least as far as Anselm was concerned, without bloodshed.<sup>31</sup> Wazo did the same through his military exploits. In fact, Anselm used their example to apologize for Wazo's neglect of the emperor's interests military affairs rather than his participation in warfare altogether. While he defended Liège and its surrounding lands, the bishop refused to leave his diocese to do anything further.<sup>32</sup> His actions were highly offensive to the emperor, as he refused to fight any more than he had to in order to defend his own diocese.

Another work out of Lotharingia, *Vita Balderici*, recounted the failed example of the warrior bishop. The author, a monk from Saint-Jacques writing around 1100, depicted the military conflicts and eventual defeat led by the monastery's founder, Bishop Balderic II of Liège. Like Anselm's account, *Vita Balderici* did not condone the violence of warfare and sought to justify Balderic's actions through pure necessity. The bishop usually fought against rebellious nobility in the name of Henry II. Balderic's attempt to build a castle near Louvain, home to a rebellious count, resulted in a battle between the secular and ecclesiastical forces in 1013; the

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 104-105.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 113-114. Franco, according to Anselm, actually resigned from his post after he spilled blood in battle, thus keeping his image as a cleric dedicated to non-violence.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 115.

count badly defeated.<sup>33</sup> Balderic's actions could have easily been excused as his duty to perform *servitium regis*, as he attempted to impose imperial rule on the region through his own episcopal forces, but this was not enough for the author to leave the matter alone. In order to rectify his mistakes, Balderic constructed the monastery of Saint-Jacques, driving home the fact that "leading an army in a worldly fashion was a great sin for a priest."<sup>34</sup> Whether or not this was truthfully the reason for the monastery's foundations is debatable, but irrelevant. The author, writing fifty years after Anselm in the same city, was even more adamant against the participation of the clergy in violence; even his service on behalf of Henry II did not excuse his actions. This is almost a parallel image of Thietmar of Merseburg's treatment of Adalbold of Utrecht's defeat in the same year; the Ottonian bishop still recognized the military potential of the fighting clergy even in their failures. In the monastic tradition of the west, however, the monk of Saint-Jacques deemed this military participation as altogether unnecessary and even sinful.

### *Conclusion*

The concept of the fighting clergy became significantly more positive in the tenth century, particularly in the heart of the Ottonian Empire, where the military service ecclesiastical magnates was imperative to the protection and stability of the empire. Widukind and Thietmar's accounts showed a mounting tolerance for violence within the clergy, and while the later authors in Lotharingia refrained from depicting the violent image of the warrior bishop, they also understood the importance of the clergy's involvement in warfare. This positive image showed

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 120.

how much events of the tenth century changed the role of the warrior bishop, an image that lasted into the eleventh century before the Investiture Controversy.

## Conclusion

It was during the tenth century that the Ottonians used the clergy's military capacity at an increasing rate to exercise control over the empire, fundamentally changing the relationship between clergy and warfare. In earlier centuries, the Frankish kingdoms took control of local religious institutions and implemented a political agenda that married the Church and the State, forcing secular and military duties upon the high clergy. When the Ottonian kings implemented the *Reichskirchensystem* after consolidating the lands in East Francia, obligations to the state intensified. Because the kings used a network of royal ecclesiastical institutions to move between duchies and to impose their authority, the royal monasteries and their economic contributions, maintenance of roads and fortresses, and military households became crucial to the empire's political and military structure. The heads of these households, bishops, abbots, and even abbesses, had additional duties that mirrored the secular nobility, which indicated the escalating blurring of the distinction between the religious and secular offices.

Henry I's reliance on siege warfare and the defense and upkeep of fortifications in the first half of the tenth century ensured that the clergy's role in military operations was crucial throughout the empire. Ecclesiastical leaders could defend cities and fortresses from within, avoiding the Church's ban of bloodshed, even if some figures would engage in battle anyway. While these spectacular stories of the warrior bishop occurred in every region of the empire, it was obvious that the majority of them were concentrated in the regions where the king's direct authority was weaker. Under Otto I, this was in the western regions of the realm; in later dates, the presence of the clergy became stronger in the east. As the fighting clergy developed under the Ottonians, their appearances became more frequent, showing that it was in the tenth century that their military potential were realized.

The slow acceptance of violence in the Ottonian Empire is evident in the histories of Thietmar and Widukind, who treated the fighting clergy with veneration and respect. Their accounts of the tenth century emphasized the military exploits of the Saxon kings and their ecclesiastical retainers, asserting that their actions were for the defense of the kingdom. The change in attitude towards the fighting clergy in the tenth century indicated not only their acceptance in the tenth century, but also their significance; the military support provided by the Church was just as important as the secular nobility. Due to the system built around the king's itinerant form of rule, the clergy were an inevitable part of the secular affairs of the empire, and the military responsibility they took on was inseparable from their role in the government of the Ottonian empire. It is for this reason that the warrior bishop should be examined within the context of the tenth century: the policies and strategies of the Ottonian kings developed the fighting clergy into an effective military bastion that defined the conflicts of the tenth century.

### *Epilogue: Backlashes in the Eleventh Century*

The general acceptance of the warrior bishop, as an isolated phenomenon and as a symptom of the extensive *Reichskirchenystem*, began to disintegrate after the succession of the Salian dynasty in the eleventh century. Henry III deposed no less than three rival popes and replaced his own German candidate on the papal seat in 1045, and managed to keep a German pope on the throne until his death in 1056.<sup>1</sup> The Italian nobility was able to reclaim the papacy from his six-year-old son, Henry IV, and the deceased king's previous interference with the papal elections became the source of the Investiture Controversy. This marked an important

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<sup>1</sup> T.J.H. McCarthy, trans., *Chronicles of the Investiture Contest: Frutolf of Michelsburg and his Continuators* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 2-3.

backlash against secular attempts to appoint ecclesiastical positions.<sup>2</sup> This issue, which was a point of contention in the Carolingian period, still caused friction in the tenth century, although the German king's right to appoint bishops and abbots was rarely contested. Local clergy often expressed imperial loyalty to the point of disregarding doctrines of the Church, as seen with Thietmar and Widukind, but this devotion began to wane during the Henry IV's reign. Herman of Reichenau, the first author of *The Swabian Chronicles*, initially supported the German imperial agenda, but his enthusiasm waned and he started to support papal reform.<sup>3</sup> This resistance to imperial control over the church was not directly aimed at the presence of the clergy in military affairs, but rather the system in which they operated.

There was also resistance against violence in the clergy; it was Henry III himself who attempted to introduce the Peace of God movement.<sup>4</sup> This movement promoted nonviolence, particularly in regards to the Church, and was popular in the eleventh century.<sup>5</sup> It was founded in the tenth century, a possible response to the increasing militarization of the clergy under the Ottonians and the constant violence the laity were surrounded by.<sup>6</sup> Its impact, however, was not felt in Germany until the succeeding century. While resistance always existed, the silence of the tenth century and early eleventh century indicated that the fighting clergy had reached its *Blütezeit*.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>3</sup> I.S. Robinson, introduction to *Eleventh-Century Germany: The Swabian Chronicles*, trans. I.S. Robinson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 18.

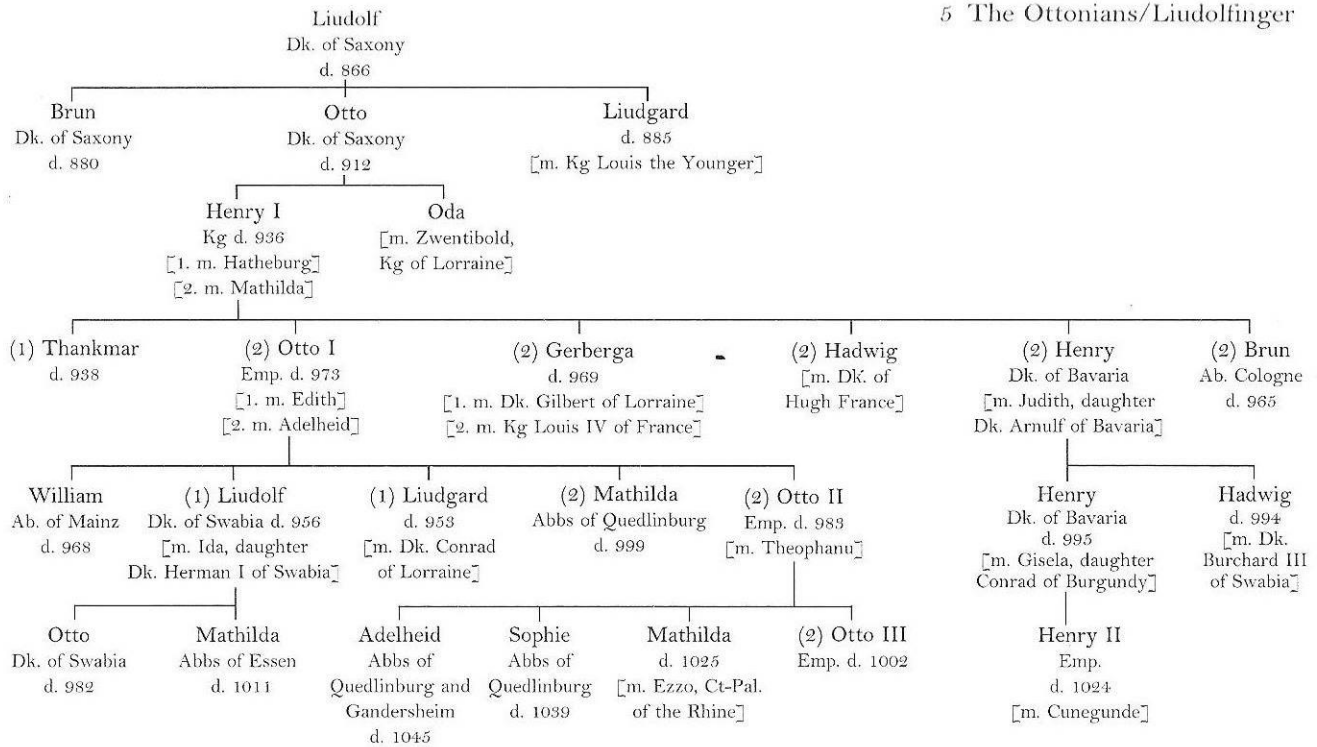
<sup>4</sup> McCarthy, *Investiture Contest*, 7.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 124. Henry IV established councils of this movement during his reign.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Landes, "The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustinian Historiography, Medieval and Modern," In *The Apocalyptic Year 1000: Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950-1050*, ed. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, and David C. Van Meer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 258.

## Appendix A

### 5 The Ottonians/Liudolfinger



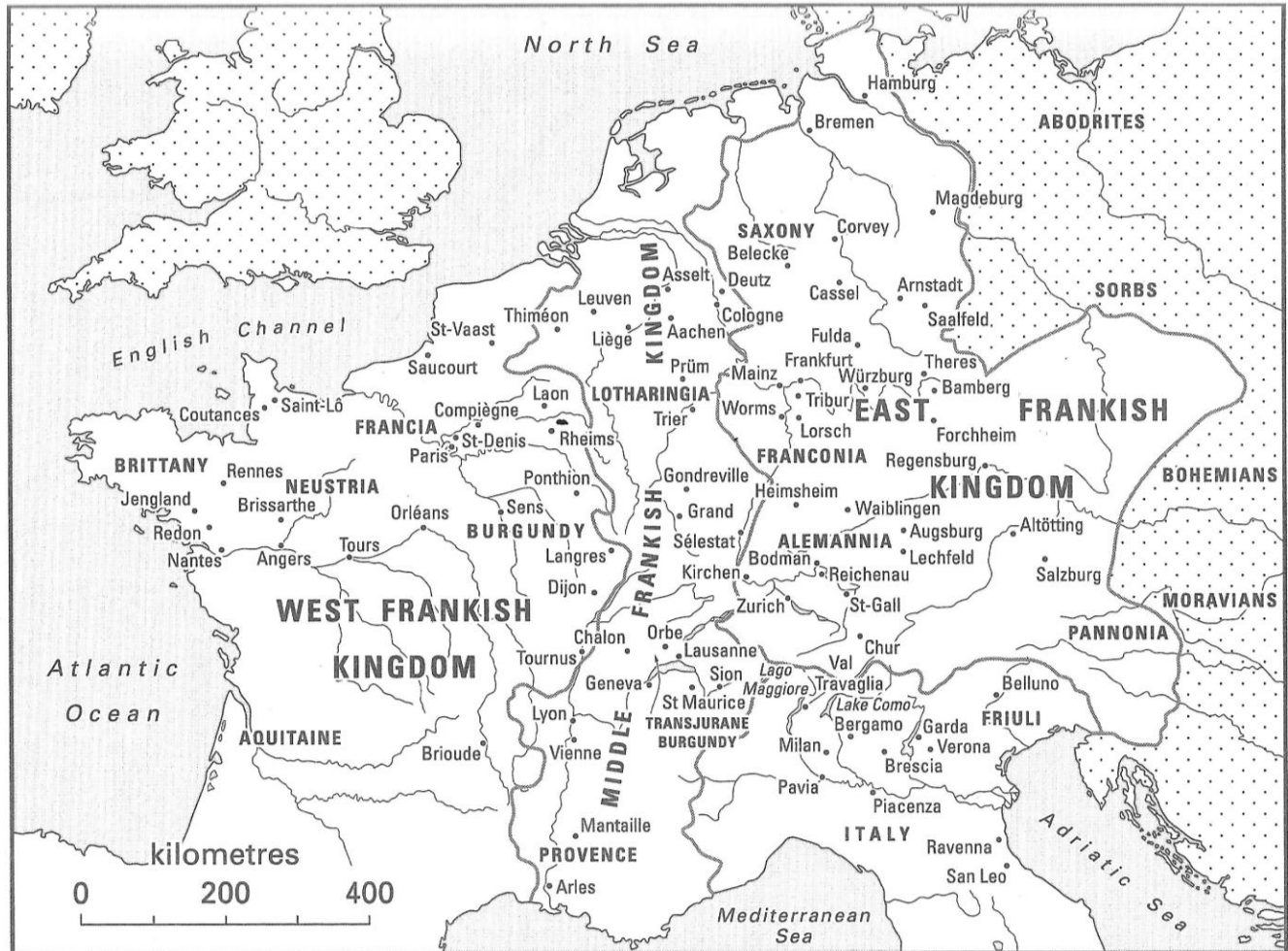
Source: T. Reuter, *Germany in the Early Middle Ages, 800-1056*, London and New York, 1991, p. 337.

The genealogy of the Ottonian royal family, also known as Liudolfings.

Thietmar, *Chronicon*.



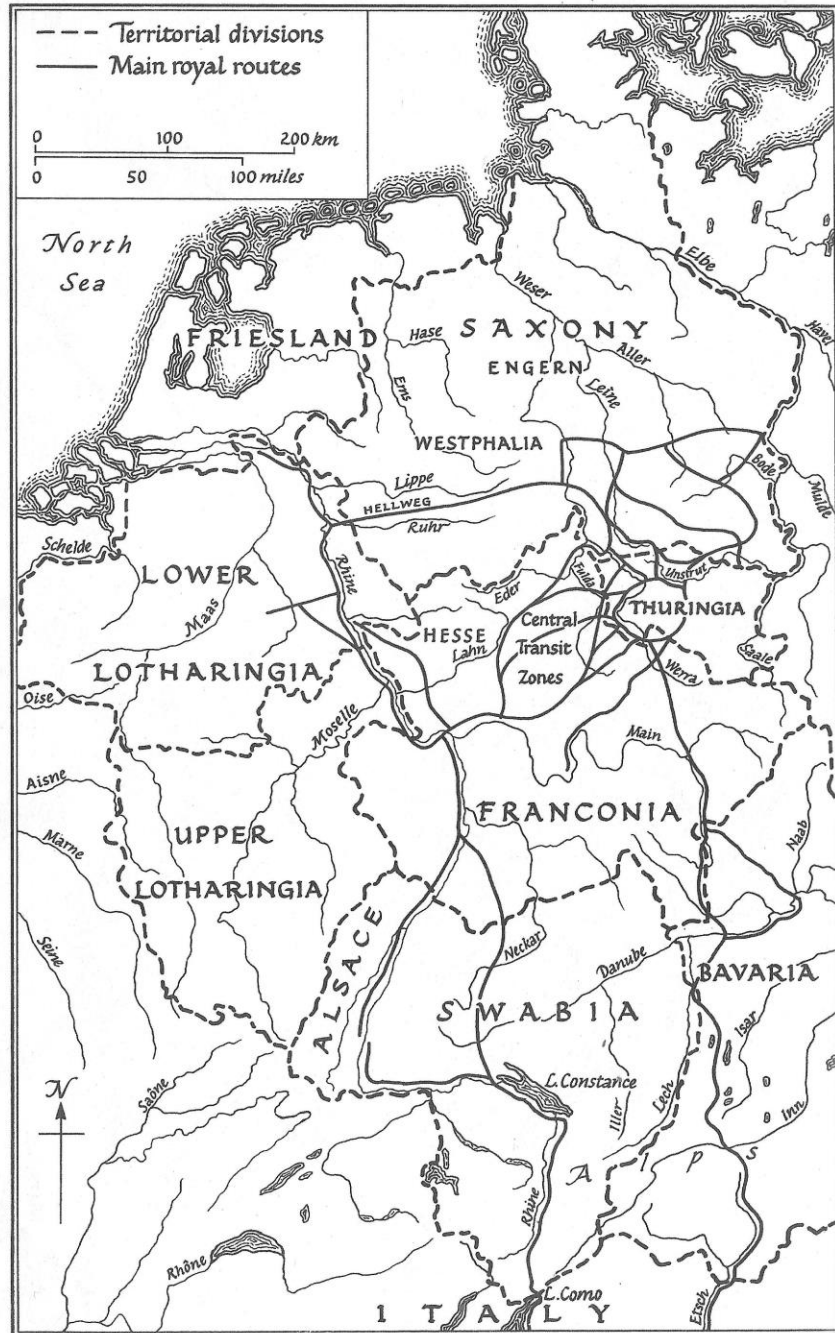
## Appendix B



1 Late Carolingian/early Ottonian Europe

MacLean, *Regino of Prüm*.

## Appendix C



Map 4 Main royal routes and transit zones

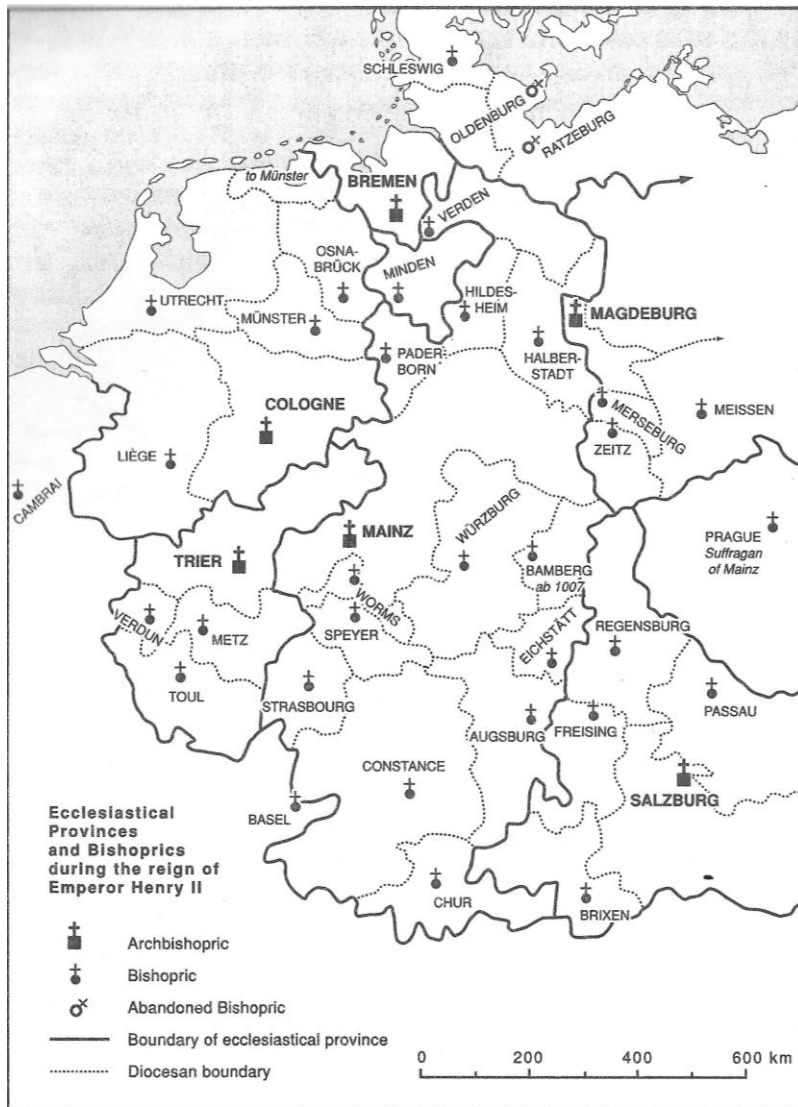
Source: Adapted from Müller-Mertens, *Die Reichsstruktur*, map entitled 'Die deutschen Reichsteile bzw. die politischen Bezugsräume der Darstellung und des Itinerarkalenders'.

## Appendix D



Map 1 The *Reich* during the reign of Henry II

## Appendix E



Map 2 Ecclesiastical provinces and bishoprics

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